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VOL. 572.

SIR JASPER CAREW BY CHARLES LEVER

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. 1.

LEIPZIG: BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ.

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SIR JASPER CAREW,

HIS

LIFE AND EXPERIENCES.

BY

CHARLES LEVER,

AUTHOR OF "CHARLES O'MALLEY," ETC.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1861.

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REGIA
MONACENSIS.

DEDICATED

TO

H. D. W.

BY

ONE WHO THINKS HIGHLY OF HIS HEART, AND HOPES MUCH FROM HIS HEAD.

NOTICE.

It has been constantly observed by writers of travels, that to gain credence for any of the strange incidents of their journeys, they have been compelled to omit many of the most eventful passages of their lives. "The gentlemen," and still more the ladies, "who live at home at ease," take, indeed, but little account of those adventures which are the daily lot of more precarious existences, and are too prone to set down as marvellous, or worse, events which have comparatively little remarkable for those whose fortunes have thrown them on the highways of the world.

I make this remark in part to deprecate some of the criticism which I have seen pronounced upon these Memoirs. It has been said — How could any man have met so many adventures? and my answer is simply — By change of place. Nothing more is

required. The pawn on the chess-board has a life of a very uneventful character, simply because his progress is slow, methodical, and unchanging. Not so the knight, who, with all the errantry of his race, dashes here and there, encountering every rank and condition of men — continually in difficulties himself, or the cause of them to others. What the knight is to the chess-board, the adventurer is to real life. The same wayward fortune and zig-zag course belongs to each, and each is sure to have his share in nearly every great event that occurs about him. But I also refer to this subject on another account. Tale writers are blamed for the introduction of incidents which have little bearing on the main story, or whose catastrophes are veiled in obscurity. But I would humbly ask, are not these exactly the very traits of real life? Is not every man's course chequered with incidents, and crossed by people who never affect his actual career? Do not things occur every week singular enough to demand a record, and yet, to all seeming, not in any way bearing upon our fortunes? While I need but appeal to universal experience to corroborate me when I say that life is little else than a long series of uncompleted adventures, I do not employ

the strongest of all argument on this occasion, and declare that in writing my Memoirs I had no choice but to set down the whole or nothing, because I am aware that some sceptical folk would like to imagine *me* a shade, and *my story* a fiction!

I am quite conscious of some inaccuracies; for aught I know there may be many in these pages; but I wrote most of them in very old age, away from books, and still further away from the friends who might have afforded me their counsel and guidance. I wrote with difficulty and from memory — that is, from a memory in which a fact often faded while I transcribed it, and where it demanded all my efforts to call up the incidents, without, at the same time, summoning a dozen others, irrelevant and unwarranted.

These same pages, with all their faults, have been a solace to many a dreary hour, when, alone and companionless, I have sat in the stillness of a home that no footsteps resound in, and by a hearth where none confronts me. They would be still richer in comfort if I thought they could cheer some heart lonely as my own, and make pain or sorrow forget something of its sting. I scarcely dare to

hope for this, but I *wish* it heartily! and if there be aught of presumption in the thought, pray set it down amongst the other errors and shortcomings of

JASPER CAREW.

Palazzo Guidotté, Senegaglia,
Jan. 1855.

SIR JASPER CAREW.

CHAPTER I.

Some "Notices of my Father and Mother."

It has sometimes occurred to me that the great suits of armour we see in museums, the huge helmets that come down like extinguishers on the penny candles of modern humanity, the enormous cuirasses and gigantic iron gloves, were neither more nor less than downright and deliberate cheats practised by the "Gents" of those days for the especial humbugging of us their remote posterity. It might, indeed, seem a strange and absurd thing that any people should take so much pains, and incur so much expense, just for the sake of mystifying generations then unborn. Still, I was led to this conclusion by observing and reflecting on a somewhat similar phenomenon in our own day; and indeed it was the only explanation I was ever able to come to, respecting those great mansions that we Irish gentlemen are so fond of rearing on our estates, "totally regardless of expense," and just as indifferent to all the circumstances of our fortune, and all the requirements of our station — the only real difference being, that our forefathers were satisfied with quizzing their descendants, whereas we, with a livelier appreciation of fun, prefer enjoying the joke in our own day.

Perhaps I am a little too sensitive on this point;

but my reader will forgive any excess of irritability when I tell him that to this national ardour for brick and mortar — this passion for cutstone and stucco — it is, I owe, not only some of the mischances of my life, but also a share of what destiny has in store for those that are to come after me. We came over to Ireland with Cromwell; my ancestor, I believe, and I don't desire to hide the fact, was a favourite trumpeter of Old Noll. He was a powerful, big-boned, slashing trooper, with a heavy hand on a sabre, and a fine, deep, bass voice in the conventicle; and if his Christian name was a little inconvenient for those in a hurry — he was called Bind-your-kings-in-chains-and-your-nobles-in-links-of-iron Carew — it was of the less consequence, as he was always where he ought to be, without calling. It was said, that in the eyes of his chief his moderation was highly esteemed, and that this virtue was never more conspicuous than in his choice of a recompense for his services; since, instead of selecting some fine, rich tract of Meath, or Queen's County, some fruitful spot on the Shannon or the Blackwater, with a most laudable and exemplary humility he pitched upon a dreary and desolate region in the County Wicklow — picturesque enough in point of scenery, but utterly barren and uncultivated. Here, at a short distance from the opening of the Vale of Arklow, he built a small house, contiguous to which, after a few years, was to be seen an outlandish kind of scaffolding — a composite architecture between a draw-well and a gallows; and which, after various conjectures about its use — some even suggesting that it was a new apparatus "to raise the Devil" — turned out to be the machinery for working a valuable lead mine, which,

by "pure accident," my fortunate ancestor had just discovered there.

It was not only lead, but copper ore was found there; and at last silver; so that in the course of three generations, the trumpeter's descendants became amongst the very richest of the land; and when my father succeeded to the estate, he owned almost the entire country between Newrath Bridge and Arklow. There were seventeen townlands in our possession, and five mines in full work. In one of these, gold was found, and several fine crystals of topaz, and beryl — a few specimens of which are yet to be seen in the Irish Academy. It has been often remarked that men of ability rarely or never transmit their gifts to the generation succeeding them. Nature would seem to set her face against monopolies, and at least, so far as intellect is concerned, to be a genuine "Free-Trader." There is another and very similar fact, however, which has not attracted so much notice. It is this; that not only the dispositions and tastes of successive generations change and alternate, but that their luck follows the same law, and that after a good run of fortune for maybe a century or two, there is certain to come a turn; and thus it is, that these ups and downs, which are only remarked in the lives of individuals, are occurring in the wider ocean of general humanity. The common incident that we so often hear of, a man winning an enormous sum and losing every farthing of it, down to the very half-crown he began with, is just the type of many a family history — the only difference being, that the event which, in one case, occupied a night, in the other was spread over two, or maybe three hundred years.

When my father succeeded to the family property, Ireland was enjoying her very palmiest days of prosperity. The spirit of her nationality, without coming into actual collision with England, yet had begun to assume an attitude of proud hostility — a species of haughty defiance — the first effect of which was to develope and call forth all the native ardour and daring of a bold and generous people. It was in the celebrated year '82; and, doubtless, there are some yet living who can recall to memory the glorious enthusiasm of the "Volunteers." The character of the political excitement was eminently suited to the nature of the people. The themes were precisely those which lay fastest hold of enthusiastic temperaments. Liberty and Independence were in every mouth. From the glowing eloquence of the Parliament House — the burning words and heart-stirring sentences of Grattan and Ponsonby — they issued forth to mingle in all the exciting din of military display — the tramp of armed battalions, and the crash and glitter of mounted squadrons. To these succeeded those festive meetings, resounding with all the zeal of patriotic toasts — brilliant displays of those convivial accomplishments for which the Irish gentlemen of that day were so justly famed. There was something peculiarly splendid and imposing in the spectacle of the nation at that moment; but, like the grand groupings we witness upon the stage, all the gorgeousness of the display was only to intimate that the curtain was about to fall!

But to come back to personal matters. At the first election, which occurred after his accession to the property, my father was returned for Wicklow, by a large

majority, in opposition to the Government candidate; and thus, at the age of twenty-two, entered upon life with all the glowing ardour of a young patriot — rich, well-looking, and sufficiently gifted to be flattered into the self-confidence of actual ability.

Parliamentary conflicts have undergone a change, just as great as those of actual warfare. In the times I speak of, tactical skill and subtlety would have availed but little, in comparison with their present success. The House was then a species of tournament, where he who would break his lance with the most valiant tilter, was always sure of an antagonist. The marshalling of party, the muster of adherents, was not, as it now is, all-sufficient against the daring eloquence of a solitary opponent; and if, as is very probable, men were less under the guidance of great political theorems, they were assuredly not less earnest and devoted than we now see them. The contests of the House were carried beyond its walls, and political opponents became deadly enemies, ready to stake life at any moment in defence of their opinions. It was the school of the period; nor can it be better illustrated than by the dying farewell of a great statesman, whose last legacy to his son was in the words: "Be always ready with the pistol." This great maxim, and the maintenance of a princely style of living, were the two golden rules of the time. My father was a faithful disciple of the sect.

In the course of a two years' tour on the Continent, he signalised himself by various adventures, the fame of which has not yet faded from the memory of some survivors. The splendour of his retinue was the astonishment of foreign courts; and the journals of the time

constantly chronicled the princely magnificence of his entertainments, and the costly extravagance of his household. Wagers were the fashionable pastime of the period; and to the absurd extent to which this passion was carried, are we in all probability now indebted for that character of eccentricity by which our countrymen are known over all Europe.

The most perilous exploits — the most reckless adventures — ordeals of personal courage, strength, endurance, and address, were invented as the subject of these wagers; and there was nothing too desperately hazardous, nor too absurdly ridiculous, as not to find a place in such contests. My father had run the gauntlet through all, and in every adventure was said to have acquitted himself with honour and distinction.

Of one only of these exploits do I intend to make mention here; the reason for the selection will soon be palpable to my reader. At the time I speak of, Paris possessed two circles totally distinct in the great world of society. One was that of the Court; the other rallied around the Duc d'Orleans. To this latter my father's youth, wealth, and expensive tastes predisposed him, and he soon became one of the most favoured guests of the Palais Royal. Scanty as are the materials which have reached us, there is yet abundant reason to believe that never, in the most abandoned days of the Regency, was there any greater degree of profligacy than then prevailed there. Every vice and debauchery of a corrupt age was triumphant, and even openly defended on the base and calumnious pretence, that the company was at least as moral as that of the "Petit Trianon." My father, I have said, was received into this set with peculiar honour. His handsome figure —

his winning manners — an easy disposition —- and an ample fortune, were ready recommendations in his favour, and he speedily became the chosen associate of the Prince.

Amongst his papers are to be found the unerring proofs of what this friendship cost him. Continued losses at play had to be met by loans of money, at the most ruinous rates of interest; and my poor father's memoranda are filled with patriarchal names, that too surely attest the nature of such transactions. It would seem, however, that fortune at last took a turn — at least the more than commonly wasteful extravagance of his life at one period would imply that he was a winner. These gambling contests between the Duke and himself had latterly become like personal conflicts, wherein each staked skill, fortune, and address, on the issue; duels, which involved passions just as deadly as any whose arbitrement was ever decided by sword or pistol! As luck favoured my father, the Duke's efforts to raise money were not less strenuous, and frequently as costly, as his own; while on more than one occasion the jewelled decorations of his rank — his very sword — were the pledges of the play-table. At last, so decidedly had been the run against him, that the Prince was forced to accept of loans from my father, to enable him to continue the contest. Even this alternative, however, availed nothing. Loss followed upon loss, till at length, one night, when fortune had seemed to have utterly forsaken him, the Prince suddenly rose from the table, and saying — "Wait a moment, I'll make one 'coup' more," disappeared from the room. When he returned, his altered looks almost startled my father. The colour had entirely deserted his cheeks;

his very lips were bloodless; his eyes were streaked with red vessels; and when he tried to speak, his first words were inaudible. Pressing my father down again upon the seat from which he had arisen, he leaned over his shoulder, and whispered in a voice low and broken, —

"I have told you, Chevalier, that I would make one 'coup' more. This sealed note contains the stake I now propose to risk. You are at liberty to set any sum you please against it. I can only say, it is all that now remains to me of value in the world. One condition, however, I must stipulate for; it is this: If you win" — here he paused, and a convulsive shudder rendered him for some seconds unable to continue — "if you win, that you leave France within three days, and that you do not open this paper till within an hour after your departure."

My father was not only disconcerted by the excessive agitation of his manner, but he was little pleased with a compact, the best issue of which would compel him to quit Paris and all its fascinations at a very hour's notice. He tried to persuade the Prince that there was no necessity for so heavy a venture; that he was perfectly ready to advance any sum his royal highness could name; that Fortune, so persecuting as she seemed, should not be pushed further, at least for the present. In fact, he did everything which ingenuity could prompt to decline the wager; but the more eagerly he argued, the more resolute and determined became the Duke; till at last, excited by his losses, and irritated by an opposition to which he was but little accustomed, the Prince cut short the discussion by the insolent taunt, "that the Chevalier was probably

right, and deemed it safer to retain what he had won, than risk it by another venture."

"Enough, sir; I am quite ready," replied my father, and reseated himself at the table.

"There's my stake, then," said the Prince, throwing a sealed envelope on the cloth.

"Your royal highness must correct me, if I am in error," said my father, "and make mine beneath what it ought to be." At the same moment he pushed all the gold before him — several thousand louis — into the middle of the table.

The Prince never spoke nor moved; and my father, after in vain waiting for some remark, said, —

"I perceive, sir, that I have miscalculated. These are all that I have about me;" and he drew from his pocket a mass of bank notes of considerable amount. The Prince still maintained silence.

"If your royal highness will not vouchsafe to aid me, I must only trust to my unguided reason, and however conscious of the inferiority of the venture, I can but stake all that I possess. Yes, sir, such is my stake."

The Prince bowed formally and coldly, and pushed the cards towards my father. The fashionable game of the day was called Barocco, in which, after certain combinations, the hand to whom fell the Queen of Spades became the winner. So evenly had gone the fortune of the game, that all now depended on this card. My father was the dealer, and turned up each card slowly, and with a hand in which not the slightest tremor could be detected. The Prince, habitually the very ideal of a gambler's cold impassiveness, was agitated beyond all his efforts to control, and sat with

his eyes riveted on the game; and when the fatal card fell at length from my father's hand, his arms dropped powerless at either side of him, and with a low groan he sank fainting on the floor.

He was quickly removed by his attendants, and my father never saw him after! All his efforts to obtain an audience were in vain; and when his entreaties became more urgent, he was given significantly to understand that the Prince was personally indisposed to receive him. Another and stronger hint was also supplied, in the shape of a letter from the Minister of Police, inclosing my father's passport, and requiring his departure, by way of Calais, within a given time.

Whatever share curiosity, as to the contents of the paper, might have had in my father's first thoughts, a sense of offended dignity for the manner of his treatment speedily mastered; and as he journeyed along towards the coast, his mind was solely occupied with one impression. To be suddenly excluded from the society in which he had so long mixed, and banished from the country where he had lived with such distinction, were indeed deep personal affronts, and not without severe reflection on his conduct and character.

His impatience to quit a land where he had been so grossly outraged, grew greater with every mile he travelled; and although the snow lay heavily on the road, he passed on regardless of everything but his insulted honour. It was midnight when he reached Calais. The packet, which had sailed in the afternoon, had just re-entered the port, driven back by a hurriance, that had almost wrecked her. The passengers, overcome with terror, fatigue, and exhaustion, were crowding

into the hotel, at the very moment of my father's arrival. The gale increased in violence at every instant, and the noise of the sea breaking over the old piles of the harbour, was now heard like thunder. Indifferent to such warning, my father sent for the captain, and asked him what sum would induce him to put to sea. A positive refusal to accept of any sum was the first reply, but by dint of persuasion, persistance, and the temptation of a large reward, he at last induced him to comply.

To my father's extreme surprise, he learned that two ladies who had just arrived at the hotel, were no less resolutely bent on departure, and, in defiance of the gale which was now terrific, sent to beg that they might be permitted to take their passage in the vessel. To the landlord, who conveyed this request, my father strongly represented the danger of such an undertaking; that nothing short of an extreme necessity would have induced him to embark in such a hurricane; that the captain, who had undertaken the voyage at his especial entreaty, might, most naturally, object to the responsibility. In a word, he pleaded everything against this request, but was met by the steady, unvarying reply, "That their necessity was not less urgent than his own, and that nothing less than the impossibility should prevent their departure."

"Be it so, then," said my father, whose mind was too much occupied with his own cares to bestow much attention on strangers. Indeed, so little of either interest or curiosity did his fellow-travellers excite in him, that although he assisted them to ascend the ship's side, he made no effort to see their faces; nor did he address to them a single word. They who cross the narrow

strait now-a-days, with all the speed of a modern mail-steamer, can scarcely credit how much of actual danger the passage once involved. The communication with the Continent was frequently suspended for several days together; and it was no unusual occurrence to hear of three or even four mails being due from France. So great was the storm on the occasion I refer to, that it was full two hours before the vessel could get clear of the port; and even then, with a mainsail closely reefed, and a mere fragment of a foresail, the utmost she could do was to keep the sea. An old and worthless craft, she was ill-suited to such a service; and now, at each stroke of the waves, some bulwark would be washed away, some spar broken, or part of the rigging torn in shreds. The frail timbers creaked and groaned with the working, and already, from the strain, leaks had burst open in many places, and half the crew were at the pumps. My father, who kept the deck without quitting it, saw that the danger was great, and, not improbably, now condemned his own rashness when it was too late. Too proud, however, to confess his shame, he walked hurriedly up and down the poop, only stopping to hold on at those moments when some tremendous lurch almost laid the craft under. In one of these it was, that he chanced to look down through the cabin grating, and there beheld an old lady, at prayer, on her knees; her hands held a crucifix before her, and her upturned eyes were full of deep devotion. The lamp which swung to and fro above her head threw a passing light upon her features, and showed that she must once have been strikingly handsome, while even yet the traces were those that bespoke birth and condition. My father in vain sought for her companion,

and while he bent down over the grating to look, the the captain came up to his side.

"The poor Duchess is terribly frightened," said he, with an attempt at a smile, which only half succeeded.

"How do you call her?" asked my father.

"La Duchesse de Sargance, a celebrated court beauty some forty years ago. She has been always attached to the Duchess of Orleans; or some say, to the Duke. At least, she enjoys the repute of knowing all his secret intrigues and adventures."

"The Duke!" said my father, musing; and suddenly calling to mind his pledge, he drew nigh to the binnacle lamp, and, opening his letter, bent down to read it. A small gold locket fell into his hand, unclasping which, he beheld the portrait of a beautiful girl of eighteen or nineteen. She was represented in the act of binding up her hair; and in the features, the colouring, and the attitude, she seemed the very ideal of a Grecian statue. In the corner of the paper was written the words, "Ma Fille," "Philippe d'Orleans."

"Is this possible? can this be real?" cried my father, whose quick intelligence at once seemed to divine all. The next instant he was at the door of the cabin, knocking impatiently to get in.

"Do you know this, madam?" cried he, holding out the miniature towards the Duchess. "Can you tell me aught of this?"

"Is the danger over — are we safe?" was her exclamation, as she arose from her knees.

"The wind is abating, madam — the worst is over; and now to my question."

"She is yours, sir," said the Duchess, with a deep

obeisance. "His royal highness's orders were, not to leave her till she reached England. Heaven grant that we are to see that hour. This is Mademoiselle de Courtois," continued she, as at the same instant the young lady entered the cabin.

The graceful ease and unaffected demeanour with which she received my father at once convinced him that she at least knew nothing of the terrible compact in which she was involved. Habituated as he was to all the fascinations of beauty, and all the blandishments of manner, there was something to him irresistibly charming in the artless tone with which she spoke of her voyage, and all the pleasure she anticipated from a tour through England.

"You see, sir," said the Duchess, when they were once more alone together, "Mademoiselle Josephine is a stranger to the position in which she stands. None could have undertaken the task of breaking it to her. Let us trust that she is never to know it."

"How so, madam? Do you mean that I am to relinquish my right?" cried my father.

"Nothing could persuade me that you would insist upon it, sir."

"You are wrong, then, madam," said he sternly. "To the letter I will maintain it. Mademoiselle de Courtois is mine; and within twenty-four hours the law shall confirm my title, for I will make her my wife."

I have heard that however honourable my father's intentions thus proclaimed themselves, the Duchess only could see a very lamentable "mésalliance" in such a union; nor did she altogether disguise from my father that his royal highness was very likely to take the

same view of the matter. Mademoiselle's mother was of the best blood of France, and illegitimacy signified little if Royalty but bore its share of the shame. Fortunately the young lady's scruples were more easily disposed of: perhaps my father understood better how to deal with them; at all events, one thing is certain, Madame de Sargance left Dover for Calais on the same day that my father and his young bride started for London — perhaps it might be exaggeration to say the happiest, but it is no extravagance to call them — as handsome a pair as ever journeyed the same road on the same errand. I have told some things in this episode, which, perhaps, second thoughts would expunge, and I have omitted others that as probably the reader might naturally have looked for. But the truth is, the narrative has not been without its difficulties. I have had to speak of a tone of manners and habits now happily bygone, of which I dare not mark my reprehension with all the freedom I could wish, since one of the chief actors was my father — its victim, my mother.

CHAPTER II.

The Illustration of an Adage,

"Marry in haste," says the adage, and we all know what occupation leisure will bring with it; unhappily my father was not to prove the exception to the maxim. It was not that his wife was wanting in any quality which can render married life happy; she was, on the contrary, most rarely gifted with them all. She was young, beautiful, endowed with excellent health, and the very best of tempers. The charm of her manner

won every class with whom she came into contact. But, alas, that there should be a but — she had been brought up in habits of the most expensive kind. Living in royal palaces, waited on by troops of menials, with costly equipages, and splendid retinues ever at her command, only mingling with those whose lives were devoted to pleasure and amusement, conversant with no other themes than those which bore upon gaiety and dissipation, she was peculiarly unsuited to the wear and tear of a social system which demanded fully as much of self-sacrifice as of enjoyment. The long lessons my father would read to her of deference to this one, patient endurance of that, how she was to submit to the tiresome prosings of certain notorieties in respect of their political or social eminence, she certainly heard with most exemplary resignation; but by no effort of her reason, nor, indeed, of imagination, could she attain to the fact, why any one should associate with those distasteful to them, nor ever persuade herself that any worldly distinction could possibly be worth having at such a price.

She was quite sure — indeed, her own experience proved it — "that the world was full of pleasant people." Beauty to gaze on and wit to listen to, were certainly not difficult to be found; why, then, any one should persist in denying themselves the enjoyment derivable from such sources was as great a seeming absurdity as that of him, who, turning his back on the rare flowers of a conservatory, would go forth to make his bouquet of the wild flowers and weeds of the roadside. Besides this, in the world wherein she had lived, her own gifts were precisely those which attracted most admiration and exerted most sway; and it was

somewhat hard to descend to a system where such a coinage was not accepted as currency, but rather regarded as gilded counters, pretty to look at, but, after all, a mere counterfeit money, unrecognised by the mint.

My father saw all this when it was too late; but he lost no time in vain repinings. On the contrary, having taken a cottage in a secluded part of North Wales, by way of passing the honeymoon in all the conventional isolation that season is condemned to, he devoted himself to that educational process at which I have hinted, and began to instil those principles, to the difficulty of whose acquirement I have just alluded.

I believe that his life, at this period, was one of as much happiness as ever is permitted a poor mortality in this world; so, at least, his letters to his friends bespeak it. It may be even doubted if the little diversities of taste and disposition between himself and my mother did not heighten the sense of his enjoyment; they assuredly averted that lassitude and ennui which are often the results of a connubial duet unreasonably prolonged. I know, too, that my poor mother often looked back to that place as to the very paradise of her existence. My father had encouraged such magnificent impressions of his ancestral house and demesne, that he was obliged to make great efforts to sustain the description. An entire wing had to be built to complete the symmetry of the mansion. The roof had also to be replaced by another, of more costly construction. In the place of a stucco colonnade, one of polished granite was to be erected. The whole of the furniture was to be exchanged. Massive old cabi-

nets and oaken chairs, handsome enough in their way, were but ill-suited to ceilings of fretted gold and walls hung in the rich draperies of Lyons. The very mirrors, which had been objects of intense admiration for their size and splendour, were now to be discarded for others of more modern pretensions. The china bowls and cups, which for centuries had been regarded as very gems of vertu, were thrown indignantly aside, to make place for Sevres vases and rich groupings of pure Saxon. In fact, all the ordinary comforts and characteristics of a country gentleman's house were abandoned for the sumptuous and splendid furniture of a palace. To meet such expenses, large sums were raised on loan, and two of the richest mines on the estate were heavily mortgaged. Of course it is needless to say, that preparations on such a scale of magnificence attracted a large share of public attention. The newspapers duly chronicled the increasing splendour of "Castle Carew." Scarcely a ship arrived without some precious consignment, either of pictures, marbles, or tapestries: and these announcements were usually accompanied by some semi-mysterious paragraph about the vast wealth of the owner, and the great accession of fortune he had acquired by his marriage. On this latter point nothing was known beyond the fact, that the lady was of an ancient ducal family of France, of immense fortune, and eminently beautiful. Even my father's most intimate friends knew nothing beyond this; for, however strange it may sound to our present day notions, my father was ashamed of her illegitimacy, and rightly judged what would be the general opinion of her acquaintances should the fact become public. At last came the eventful day of the landing in Ireland, and, certainly, nothing could be

more enthusiastic nor affectionate than the welcome that met them.

Personally my father's popularity was very great — politically he had already secured many admirers, since, even in the few months of his parliamentary life, he had distinguished himself on two or three occasions. His tone was manly and independent; his appearance was singularly prepossessing; and then, as he owned a large estate, and spent his money freely, it would have been hard if such qualities had not made him a favourite in Ireland.

It was almost a procession that accompanied him from the quay to the great hotel of the Drogheda Arms, where they stopped to breakfast.

"I am glad to see you back amongst us, Carew!" said Joe Parsons, one of my father's political advisers, a county member, of great weight with the Opposition. "We want every good and true man in his place just now."

"Faith, we missed you sorely at the Curragh meetings, Watty!" cried a sporting-looking young fellow, in "tops and leathers." "No such thing as a good handicap, nor a hurdle race for a finish, without you."

"Harry deplores those pleasant evenings you used to spend at three-handed whist, with himself and Dick Morgan," said another, laughing.

"And where's Dick?" asked my father, looking around him on every side.

"Poor Dick!" said the last speaker. "It's no fault of his that he's not here to shake your hand to-day. He was arrested about six weeks ago, on some bills he passed to Fagan."

"Old Tony alive still?" said my father, laughing; "and what was the amount?" added he, in a whisper.

"A heavy figure — above two thousand, I believe; but Tony would be right glad to take five hundred."

"And couldn't Dick's friends do that much for him?" asked my father, half indignantly. "Why, when I left this, Dick was the very life of your city. A dinner without him was a failure. Men would rather have met him at the cover than seen the fox. His hearty face, and his warm shake-hands, were enough to inspire jollity into a Quaker meeting."

"All true, Watty; but there's been a general shipwreck of us all somehow. Where the money has gone, nobody knows; but every one seems out at elbows. You are the only fellow the sun shines upon."

"Make hay, then, when it does so," said my father, laughing; and, taking out his pocket-book, he scribbled a few lines on a leaf which he tore out. "Give that to Dick, and tell him to come down and dine with us on Friday. You'll join him. Quin and Parsons won't refuse me. And what do you say, Gervy Power? — can you spare a day from the tennis-court, or an evening from picquet? Jack Gore, I count upon you. Harvy Hepton will drive you down, for I know you never can pay the post-boys."

"Egad, they're too well trained to expect it. The rascals always look to me for a hint about the young horses at the Curragh, and, now and then, I do throw a stray five-pound in their way."

"We have not seen madam yet. Are we not to have that honour to-day?" said Parsons.

"I believe not; she's somewhat tired. We had a stormy time of it," said my father, who rather hesitated

about introducing his bachelor friends to my mother without some little preparation. Nor was the caution quite unreasonable. Their style and breeding were totally unlike anything she had ever seen before. The tone of familiarity they used towards each other was the very opposite to that school of courtly distance which even the very nearest in blood or kindred observed in her own country; and, lastly, very few of those then present understood anything of French; and my mother's English, at the time I speak of, did not range beyond a few monosyllables pronounced with an accent that made them all but unintelligible.

"You'll have Kitty Dwyer to call upon you the moment she hears you're come," said Quin.

"Charmed to see her, if she'll do us that honour," said my father, laughing.

"You must have no common impudence, then, Watty," said another; "you certainly jilted her."

"Nothing of the kind," replied my father; "she it was who refused me."

"Bother!" broke in an old squire, a certain Bob French, of Frenchmount; "Kitty refuse ten thousand a-year, and a good-looking fellow into the bargain! Kitty's no fool; and she knows mankind just as well as she knows horse-flesh; and faix that's not saying a trifle."

"How is she looking?" asked my father, rather anxious to change the topic.

"Just as you saw her last. She hurt her back at an ugly fence in Kennedy's park, last winter; but she's all right again, and riding the little black mare that killed Morrissy, as neatly as ever!"

"She's a fine dashing girl!" said my father.

"No, but she's a good girl," said the old squire, who evidently admired her greatly. "She rode eight miles, of a dark night, three weeks ago, to bring the doctor to old Hackett's wife, and it raining like a waterfall; and she gave him two guineas for the job. Ay, faith, and maybe, at the same time, two guineas was two guineas to her."

"Why, Mat Dwyer is not so hard-up as that comes to?" exclaimed my father.

"Isn't he, faith? I don't believe he knows where to lay his hand on a fifty-pound note this morning. The truth is, Walter, Mat ran himself out for *you*."

"For me! How do you mean for me?"

"Just because he thought you'd marry Kitty. Oh! you needn't laugh. There's many more thought the same thing. You remember yourself that you were never out of the house. You used to pretend that Bishop's-Lough was a better cover than your own — that it was more of a grass country to ride over. Then, when summer came, you took to fishing, as if your bread depended on it; and the devil a salmon you ever hooked."

A roar of laughter from the surrounders showed how they relished the confusion of my father's manner.

"Even all that will scarcely amount to an offer of marriage," said he, in half pique.

"Nobody said it would," retorted the other; "but when you teach a girl to risk her life, four days in the week, over the highest fences in a hunting country — when she gives up stitching and embroidery, to tying flies and making brown hackles — when she'd rather drive a tandem than sit quiet in a coach and four — why, she's as good as spoiled for any one else. 'Tis

the same with women as with young horses — every one likes to break them in for himself. Some like a puller; others prefer a light mouth; and there's more that would rather go along without having to think at all, sure that, no matter how rough the road, there would be neither a false step nor stumble in it."

"And what's become of MacNaghten?" asked my father, anxious to change the topic.

"Scheming — scheming, just the same as ever. I'm sure I wonder he's not here to-day. May I never! if that's not his voice I hear on the stairs. Talk of the devil ——"

"And you're sure to see Dan MacNaghten," cried my father; and the next moment he was heartily shaking hands with a tall, handsome man, who, though barely thirty, was yet slightly bald on the top of the head. His eyes were blue and large: their expression full of the joyous merriment of a happy schoolboy — a temperament that his voice and laugh fully confirmed.

"Watty, boy, it's as good as a day rule to have a look at you again," cried he. "There's not a man can fill your place when you're away — devil a one."

"There he goes — there he goes!" muttered old French, with a sly wink at the others.

"Ireland wasn't herself without you, my boy," continued MacNaghten. "We were obliged to put up with Tom Burke's harriers and old French's claret; and the one has no more scent than the other has bouquet."

French's face at this moment elicited such a

roar of laughter as drowned the remainder of the speech.

"'Twas little time you had either to run with the one or drink the other, Dan," said he; "for you were snug in Kilmainham the whole of the winter."

"Otium cum dignitate," said Dan. "I spent my evenings in drawing up a bill for the better recovery of small debts."

"How so, Dan?"

"Lending enough more, to bring the debtor into the superior courts — trying him for murder instead of manslaughter."

"Faith, you'd do either if you were put to it," said French, who merely heard the words, without understanding the context.

Dan MacNaghten was now included in my father's invitation to Castle Carew; and, after a few other allusions to past events and absent friends, they all took their leave, and my father hastened to join his bride.

"You thought them very noisy, my dear," said my father, in reply to a remark of hers. "They, I have no doubt, were perfectly astonished at their excessive quietness — an air of decorum only assumed, because they heard you were in the next room."

"They were not afraid of me, I trust," said she, smiling.

"Not exactly afraid," said my father, with a very peculiar smile.

CHAPTER III.

A Father and Daughter.

The celebrated money-lender and bill-discounter of Dublin in the times we speak of, was a certain Mr. Fagan, popularly called "The Grinder," from certain peculiarities in his dealings with those who stood in need of his aid. He had been, and indeed so had his father before him, a fruit-seller, in a quarter of the city called Mary's-abbey — a trade which he still affected to carry on, although it was well known that the little transactions of the front shop bore no imaginable proportion to the important events which were conducted in the small and gloomy back-parlour behind it.

It was a period of unbounded extravagance. Few even of the wealthiest lived within their incomes. Many maintained a style and pretension far beyond their fortunes, the first seeds of that crop of ruin whose harvest we are now witnessing. By large advances on mortgage, and great loans at moments of extreme pressure, the Grinder had amassed an immense fortune, at the same time that he possessed a very considerable influence in many counties, in whose elections he took a deep although secret interest.

If money-getting and money-hoarding was the great passion of his existence, it was in reality so in furtherance of two objects, on which he seemed to have set his whole heart. One of these was the emancipation of the Catholics; the other, the elevation of his only child, a daughter, to rank and station, by means of a high marriage.

On these two themes his every thought was fixed; and however closely the miser's nature had twined itself around his own, all the thirst for gain, all the greed of usury, gave way before these master-passions. So much was he under their guidance, that no prospect of advantage ever withdrew him from their prosecution; and he who looked for the Grinder's aid, must at least have appeared to him as likely to contribute towards one or other of these objects.

Strange as it may seem to our modern notions, the political ambition seemed easier of success than the social. With all their moneyed embarrassments, the higher classes of Ireland refused to stoop to an alliance with the families of the rich plebeians, and were much more ready to tamper with their conscience on questions of state, than to abate a particle of their pride on a matter of family connection. In this way Mr. Fagan could command many votes in the House from those who would have indignantly refused his invitation to a dinner.

In pursuit of this plan, he had given his daughter the best education that money could command. She had masters in every modern language, and in every fashionable accomplishment. She was naturally clever and quick of apprehension, and possessed considerable advantages in person and deportment. Perhaps an overweening sense of her own importance, in comparison with those about her, imparted a degree of assumption to her manner, or perhaps this was instilled into her as a suitable lesson for some future position; but so was it, that much of the gracefulness of her youth was impaired by this fault, which gradually settled down into an almost stern and defiant hardiness

of deportment — a quality little likely to be popular in high society.

A false position invariably engenders a false manner, and hers was eminently so. Immeasurably above those with whom she associated, she saw a great gulf between her and that set with whose habits and instincts she had been trained to assimilate. To condescend to intimacy with her father's guests, was to undo all the teachings of her life; and yet how barren seemed every hope of ascending to anything higher! No young proprietor had attained his majority for some years back, without being canvassed by the Grinder as a possible match for his daughter. He well knew the pecuniary circumstances of them all. To some he had lent largely, and yet somehow, although his emissaries were active in spreading the intelligence that Bob Fagan's daughter would have upwards of three hundred thousand pounds, it seemed a point of honour amongst this class that none should descend to such a union, nor stoop to an alliance with the usurer. If, in the wild orgies of after-dinner — in the mad debauchery of the mess-table, some reckless spendthrift would talk of marrying Polly Fagan, a burst of mockery and laughter was certain to hail the proposition. In fact, any alternative of doubtful honesty, any stratagem to defeat a creditor, seemed a more honourable course than such a project.

There were kind friends — mayhap amongst them were some disappointed suitors — ready to tell Polly how she was regarded by this set; and this consciousness on her part did not assuredly add to the softness of a manner that each day was rendering her more cold

and severe; and, from despising those of her own rank, she now grew to hate that above her.

It so chanced that my father was one of those on whom Fagan had long speculated for a son-in-law. There was something in the careless ease of his character that suggested the hope that he might not be very difficult of persuasion; and as his habits of expense required large and prompt supplies, the Grinder made these advances with a degree of liberality that could not fail to be flattering to a young heir.

On more than one occasion, the money was paid down before the lawyers had completed the documents; and this confidence in my father's honour had greatly predisposed him in Fagan's favour. The presumptuous idea of an alliance with him would have, of course, routed such impressions, but this never occurred to my father. It is very doubtful that he could have brought himself to believe the thing possible. So secret had been my father's marriage that none, even of his most intimate friends, knew of it, till within a short time before he arrived in Ireland. The great outlay at Castle Carew of course attracted its share of gossip, but all seemed to think that these were the preparations for an event not yet decided on. This also was Fagan's reading of it; and he watched with anxious intensity every step and detail of that costly expenditure in which his now last hope was centred.

"He must come to me for all this; I, alone, can be the paymaster here," was his constant reflection, as he surveyed plans which required a princely fortune to execute, and which no private income could possibly have supported by a suitable style of living. "A hundred thousand pounds will pay for all," was the

consolatory thought with which he solaced himself for this extravagance.

The frequent calls for money, the astounding sums demanded from time to time, did indeed alarm Fagan. The golden limit of a hundred thousand had long been passed, and yet came no sign of retrenchment; on the contrary, the plans for the completion of the castle were on a scale of even greater magnificence.

It was to assure himself as to the truth of these miraculous narratives, to see with his own eyes the splendours of which he had heard so much, that Fagan once undertook a journey down to Castle Carew. For reasons, the motives of which may be as well guessed as described, he was accompanied by his daughter. Seeming to be engaged on a little tour of the county, they arrived at the village inn at nightfall, and the following morning readily obtained the permission to visit the grounds and the mansion.

Perhaps there is no higher appreciation of landscape beauty than that of him who emerges from the dark and narrow street of some busy city — from its noise, and smoke, and din — from its vexatious cares and harassing duties, and strolls out, of a bright spring morning, through the grassy fields and leafy lanes of a rural country; there is a repose, a sense of tranquil· calm in the scene, so refreshing to those whose habitual rest comes of weariness and exhaustion. No need is there of the painter's eye nor the poet's fancy to enjoy to the utmost that rich combination of sky, and wood, and glassy lake.

There may be nothing of artistic excellence in the appreciation, but the sense of pleasure, of happiness even, is to the full as great.

It was in such a mood that Fagan found himself that morning slowly stealing along a woodland-path, his daughter at his side; halting wherever a chance opening afforded a view of the landscape, they walked leisurely on, each, as it were, respecting the other's silence. Not that their secret thoughts were indeed alike — far from it! The daughter had marked the tranquil look, the unembarrassed expression of those features so habitually agitated and careworn: she saw the sense of relief even one day, one single day of rest, had brought with it. Why should it not be always thus? thought she. He needs no longer to toil and strive. His might be a life of quietude and peace. Our fortune is far above our wants, beyond even our wishes. We might at last make friendships, real friendships, amongst those who would look on us as equals and neighbours, not as usurers and oppressors.

While such was passing in the daughter's mind, the father's thoughts ran thus: — Can she see these old woods, these waving lawns, these battlemented towers, topping the great oaks of centuries, and yet not wish to be their mistress? Does no ambition stir her heart to think, these might be mine? He scanned her features closely, but in her drooping eyelids and pensive look he could read no signs of the spirit he sought for.

"Polly," said he, at length, "this is finer, far finer than I expected; the timber is better grown, the demesne itself more spacious. I hardly looked for such a princely place."

"It is very beautiful," said she, pensively.

"A proud thing to be the owner of, Polly — a proud thing! This is not the home of some wealthy citizen; these trees are like blazons of nobility, girl."

"One might be very happy here, father," said she, in the same low voice.

"The very thought of my own mind, Polly," cried he, eagerly. "The highest in the land could ask for nothing better. The estate has been in his family for four or five generations. The owner of such a place has but to choose what he would become. If he be talented, and with capacity for public life, think of him in Parliament, taking up some great question, assailing some time-worn abuse — some remnant of that barbarous code that once enslaved us, and standing forward as the leader of an Irish party. How gracefully patriotism would sit on one who could call this his own! Not the sham patriotism of your envious plebeian, nor the mock independence of the needy lawyer, but the sturdy determination to make his country second to none. There's the Castle itself," cried he suddenly, as they emerged into an open space in front of the building; and, amazed at the spacious and splendid edifice before them, they both stood several minutes in silent admiration.

"I scarcely thought any Irish gentleman had a fortune to suit this," said she, at length.

"You are right, Polly; nor has Carew himself. The debts he will have incurred to build that Castle will hamper his estate, and cripple him and those that are to come after him. Nothing short of a large sum of ready money, enough to clear off every mortgage and incumbrance at once, could enable this young fellow to save them. Even then, his style should not be the spendthrift waste they say he is fond of. A princely household he might have, nobly maintained, and perfect

in all its details, but with good management, girl. You must remember that, Polly."

She started at this direct appeal to herself; and, as her cheeks grew crimson with conscious shame, she turned away to avoid his glance — not that the precaution was needed, for he was far too much immersed in his own thoughts to observe her. Polly had on more than one occasion seen through the ambitious schemes of her father. She had detected many a deep-laid plot he had devised to secure for her that eminence and station he longed for. Deep and painful were the wounds of her offended pride at the slights, the insults of these defeated plans. Resentments that were to last her lifetime had grown of them, and in her heart a secret grudge towards that class from which they sprung. Over and over had she endeavoured to summon up courage to tell him that, to her, these schemes were become hateful; that all dignity, all self-respect, were sacrificed in this unworthy struggle. At last came the moment of hardihood; and in a few words, at first broken and indistinct, but more assured and distinct as she went on, she said that she, at least, could never partake in his ambitious views.

"I have seen you yourself, father, after a meeting with one of these — these high and titled personages, come home, pale, care-worn, and ill. The contumely of their manner had so offended you, that you sat down to your meal without appetite. You could not speak to me; or, in the few words you dropped, I could read the bitter chagrin that was corroding your heart. You owned to me, that in the very moment of receiving favours from you, they never forgot the wide difference of rank that separated you: nay more, that they ac-

cepted your services as a rightful homage to their high estate, and made you feel a kind of serfdom in your very generosity."

"Why all this? To what end do you tell me these things, girl?" cried he angrily, while his cheek trembled with passion.

"Because if I conceal them longer — if I do not speak them — they will break my heart," said she, in an accent of deepest emotion; "because the grief they give me has worn me to very wretchedness. Is it not clear to you, father, that they wish none of us — that our blood is not their blood, nor our traditions their traditions?"

"Hold — stop — be silent, I say, or you will drive me distracted," said he, grasping her wrist in a paroxysm of rage.

"I will speak out," said she, resolutely. "The courage I now feel may, perhaps, never return to me. There is nothing humiliating in our position, save what we owe to ourselves — there is no meanness in our rank in life, save when we are ashamed of it! Our efforts to be what we were not born to be — what we ought not to be — what we cannot be: these may, indeed, make us despicable and ridiculous, for there are things in this world, father, that not even gold can buy."

"By heaven that is not true!" said he, fiercely. "There never yet was that in rank, honour, and distinction, that was not ticketed with its own price! Our haughtiest nobility — the proudest duke in the land — knows well what his alliance with a plebeian order has done for him. Look about you, girl. Who are these marchionesses — these countesses — who sweep past

us in their pride? The daughters of men of my own station — the wealthy traders of the country —"

"And what is their position, father? — a living lie. What is their haughty carriage? — the assumption of a state they were not born to — the insolent pretension to despise all amidst which they passed their youth, their earliest friendships, their purest, best days. Let them, on the other hand, cling to these — let them love what has grown into their natures from infancy — the home, the companions of their happy childhood, and see how the world will scoff at their vulgarity, their innate degeneracy, their low-born habits — vulgar if generous, vulgar when saving; their costly tastes a reproach, their parsimony a sneer."

There was a passionate energy in her tone and manner, which, heightening the expression of her handsome features, made her actually beautiful; and her father half forgot the opposition to his opinions, in his admiration of her. As he still gazed at her, the sharp sound of a horse's canter was heard behind them; and, on turning round, they saw advancing towards them a young man, mounted on a blood horse, which he rode with all the careless ease of one accustomed to the saddle; his feet dangling loosely out of the stirrups, and one hand thrust into the pocket of his shooting-jacket.

"Stand where you are!" he cried, as the father and daughter were about to move aside, and give him room to pass; and immediately after he rushed his horse at the huge trunk of a fallen beech tree, and cleared it with a spring.

"He'll be perfect at timber, when he gets a little cooler in temper," said he, turning on his saddle; and

then recognising Fagan, he reined short in, and called out, "Halloo, Tony! who ever expected to see you here? Miss Polly, your servant. A most unexpected pleasure this," added he, springing from his saddle, and advancing towards them with his hat off.

"It is not often I indulge myself with a holiday, Mr. MacNaghten," said Fagan, as though half ashamed of the confession.

"So much the worse for you, Fagan, and for your handsome daughter here; not to speak of the poor thriftless devils, like myself, who are the objects of your industrious hours. Eh, Tony, isn't that true?" and he laughed heartily at his impudent joke.

"And if it were not for such industry, sir," said the daughter, sternly, "how many like you would be abroad to-day?"

"By Jove, you are quite right, Miss Polly. It is exactly as you say. Your excellent father is the providence of us younger sons; and I, for one, will never prove ungrateful to him. But pray let us turn to another theme. Shall I show you the grounds and the gardens? The house is in such a mess of confusion, that it is scarcely worth seeing. The conservatory, however, and the dairy are nearly finished; and if you can breakfast on grapes and a pine-apple, with fresh cream to wash them down, I'll promise to entertain you."

"We ask for nothing better, Mr. MacNaghten," said Fagan, who was not sorry to prolong an interview that might afford him the information he sought for.

"Now for breakfast, and then for sight-seeing," said Dan, politely offering his arm to the young lady, and leading the way towards the house.

CHAPTER IV.

A Breakfast and its Consequences.

To do the honours of another man's house is a tremendous test of tact. In point of skill or address, we know of few things more difficult. The ease which sits so gracefully on a host becomes assurance when practised by a representative; and there is a species of monarchy about the lord of a household, that degenerates into usurpation in the hands of a pretender. It is not improbable, then, Dan MacNaghten's success in this trying part was mainly attributable to the fact that he had never thought of its difficulty. He had gone through a fine property in a few years of dissipation, during which he had played the entertainer so often and so well, that nothing seemed to him more natural than a seat at the head of a table, nor any task more simple or agreeable than to dispense its hospitalities.

The servants of the Castle were well accustomed to obey him, and when he gave his orders for breakfast to be speedily laid out in the conservatory, they set about the preparations with zeal and activity. With such promptitude, indeed, were the arrangements made, that by the time MacNaghten had conducted his guests to the spot, all was in readiness awaiting them.

The place was admirably chosen, being a central point in the conservatory, from which alleys branched out in different directions; some opening upon little plots of flowers or ornamental shrubbery, others disclosing views of the woodland scenery or the distant mountains beyond it. The table was spread beside a marble basin, into which a little group of sportive Ti-

tans were seen spouting. Great Nile lilies floated on the crystal surface, and gold and silver fish flashed and glittered below. The board itself, covered with luscious fruit, most temptingly arranged amidst beautiful flowers, displayed, besides, some gorgeous specimens of Sevres and Saxony, hastily taken from their packing-cases, while a large vase of silver, richly chased, stood in the centre, and exhibited four views of the Castle, painted in medallions on its sides.

"If you'll sit here, Miss Polly," said MacNaghten, "you'll have a prettier view, for you'll see the lake, and catch a peep, too, of the Swiss cottage on the crag above it. I must show you the cottage after breakfast. It was a bit of fancy of my own; copied, I am free to confess, from one I saw in the Oberland. Fagan, help yourself; you'll find these cutlets excellent. Our friend Carew has made an admirable choice of a cook."

"You treat us in princely fashion, sir," said Fagan, whose eyes glanced from the splendour before him to his daughter, and there tried to read her thoughts.

"You gave me no time for that; had you told me you were coming down, I'd have tried to receive you properly. As it is, pray make up your mind to stay a day or two — Carew will be so delighted; nothing flatters him so much as to hear praise of this place."

"Ah, sir, you forget that men like myself have but few holidays."

"So much the worse, Fagan; remember what the adage says about all work and no play. Not, by Jove, but I'm sure that the converse of the proposition must have its penalty, too; for if not, I should have been a marvellously clever fellow. Ay, Miss Polly, my life has been all play."

"A greater fault than the other, sir, and with this addition, too, that it makes proselytes," said she, gravely; "my father's theory finds fewer followers."

"And you not one of them?" said MacNaghten, rapidly; while he fixed a look of shrewd inquiry on her.

"Assuredly not," replied she, in a calm and collected tone.

"By Jove, I could have sworn to it," cried he, with a burst of enthusiastic delight. "There, Fagan, you see Miss Polly takes my side after all."

"I have not said so," rejoined she, gravely. "Gain and waste are nearer relatives than they suspect."

"I must own that I have never known but one of the family," said Dan, with one of those hearty laughs which seemed to reconcile him to any turn of fortune. Fagan all this time was ill at ease and uncomfortable; the topic annoyed him, and he gladly took occasion to change it by an allusion to the wine.

"And yet there are people who will tell you not to drink champagne for breakfast," exclaimed Dan, draining his glass as he spoke; "as if any man could be other than better with this glorious tipple. Miss Polly, your good health, though it seems superfluous to wish you anything."

She bowed half coldly to the compliment, and Fagan added hurriedly, "We are at least contented with our lot in life, Mr. MacNaghten."

"Egad, I should think you were, Tony, and no great merit in the resignation, after all. Put yourself in my position, however — fancy yourself Dan MacNaghten for one brief twenty-four hours. Think of a fellow who began the world — ay, and that not so

very long ago either — with something over five thousand a-year, and a good large sum in bank, and who now, as he sits here, only spends five shillings when he writes his name on a stamp; who once had houses, and hounds, and horses, but who now sits in the rumble, and rides a borrowed hack. If you want to make a virtue of your contentment, Fagan, change places with me."

"But would you take mine, Mr. MacNaghten? — would you toil, and slave, and fag — would you shut out the sun, that your daily labour should have no suggestive temptings to enjoyment — would you satisfy yourself that the world should be to you one everlasting struggle, till at last the very capacity to feel it otherwise was lost to you for ever?"

"That's more than I am able to picture to myself," said MacNaghten, sipping his wine. "I've lain in a ditch for two hours with a broken thigh-bone, thinking all the time of the jolly things I'd do when I'd get well again; I've spent some very rainy weeks in a debtor's prison, weaving innumerable enjoyments for the days when I should be at liberty; so that as to any conception of a period when I should not be able to be happy, it's clean and clear beyond me."

Polly's eyes were fixed on him as he spoke, and while their expression was almost severe, the heightened colour of her cheeks showed that she listened to him with a sense of pleasure.

"I suppose it's in the family," continued Dan, gaily. "My poor father used to say that no men have such excellent digestion as those that have nothing to eat."

"And has it never occurred to you, sir," said Polly,

with a degree of earnestness in her voice and manner — "has it never occurred to you that this same buoyant temperament could be turned to other and better account than mere" — she stopped, and blushed, and then, as if by an effort, — went on — "mere selfish enjoyment? Do you not feel that he who can reckon on such resources, but applies them to base uses when he condescends to make them the accessories of his pleasures? Is there nothing within your heart to whisper that a nature such as this was given for higher and nobler purposes; and that he who has the spirit to confront real danger should not sit down contented with a mere indifference to shame?"

"Polly! Polly!" cried her father, alike overwhelmed by the boldness and the severity of her speech.

"By Jove, the young lady has given me a canter," cried MacNaghten, who, in spite of all his good temper, grew crimson; "and I only wish the lesson had come earlier. Yes, Miss Polly," added he, in a voice of more feeling, "it's too late now."

"You must forgive my daughter, Mr. MacNaghten — she is not usually so presumptuous," said Fagan, rising from the table, while he darted a reproving glance towards Polly; "besides, we are encroaching most unfairly on your time."

"Are you so?" cried Dan, laughing, "I never heard it called mine before! Why, Tony, it's yours, and everybody's that has need of it. But if you'll not eat more, let me show you the grounds. They are too extensive for a walk, Miss Polly, so, with your leave, we'll have something to drive; meanwhile I'll tell the gardener to pluck you some flowers."

Fagan waited till MacNaghten was out of hearing, and then turned angrily towards his daughter.

"You have given him a sorry specimen of your breeding, Polly; I thought, indeed, you would have known better."

"You forget already, then, the speech with which he accosted us," said she haughtily; "but my memory is better, sir."

"His courtesy might have effaced the recollection, I think," said Fagan, testily.

"His courtesy! Has he not told you himself that every gift he possesses is but an emanation of his selfishness? The man who can be anything so easily, will be nothing if it cost a sacrifice."

"I don't care what he is," said Fagan, in a low, distinct voice, as though he wanted every word to be heard attentively. "For what he has been, and what he will be, I care just as little. It is where he moves, and lives, and exerts influence — these are what concern me."

"Are the chance glimpses that we catch of that high world so attractive, father?" said she, in an accent of almost imploring eagerness. "Do they, indeed, requite us for the cost we pay for them? When we leave the vulgar circle of our equals, is it to hear of generous actions, exalted sentiments, high-souled motives; or is it not to find every vice that stains the low, pampered up into greater infamy amongst the noble?"

"This is romance and folly, girl. Who ever dreamed it should be otherwise? Nature stamped no nobility on gold, nor made copper plebeian. This has been the work of men; and so of the distinctions among themselves, and it will not do for us to dispute

the ordinance. Station is power; wealth is power; he wo has neither, is but a slave; he who has both, may be all that he would be!"

A sudden gesture to enforce caution followed these words; and at the same time MacNaghten's merry voice was heard, singing as he came along —

"'Kneel down there, and say a prayer,
Before my hounds shall eat you.'
'I have no prayer,' the Fox replied,
'For I was bred a Quaker.'

"All right, Miss Polly. Out of compliment to you, I suppose, Kitty Dwyer, that would never suffer a collar over her head for the last six weeks, has consented to be harnessed as gently as a lamb; and my own namesake, 'Dan the Smasher,' has been traced up, without as much as one strap broken. They're a little pair I have been breaking in for Carew; for he's intolerably lazy, and expects to find his nags trained to perfection. Look at them, how they come along — no bearing reins — no blinkers. That's what I call a very neat turn out."

The praise was, assuredly, not unmerited, as two highbred black ponies swept past with a beautiful phaeton, and drew up at the door of the conservatory.

The restless eyes, the wide-spread nostrils, and quivering flanks of the animals, not less than the noiseless caution of the grooms at their heads, showed that their education had not yet been completed; and so Fagan remarked at once.

"They look rakish — there's no denying it!" said MacNaghten; "but they are gentleness itself. The only difficulty is to put the traps on them; once fairly on, there's nothing to apprehend. You are not afraid

of them, Miss Polly?" said, he, with a strong emphasis on the "you."

"When you tell me that I need not be, I have no fears," said she, calmly.

"I must be uncourteous enough to say, that I do not concur in the sentiment," said Fagan; "and, with your leave, Mr. MacNaghten, we will walk."

"Walk! Why, to see anything, you'll have twelve miles a-foot. It mustn't be thought of, Miss Polly — I cannot hear of it!" She bowed, as though in half assent; and he continued — "Thanks for the confidence; you shall see it is not misplaced. Now, Fagan ——"

"I am decided, Mr. MacNaghten; I'll not venture; nor will I permit my daughter to risk her life."

"Neither would I, I should hope," said MacNaghten; and, although the words were uttered with something of irritation, there was that in the tone that made Polly blush deeply.

"It's too bad, by Jove!" muttered he, half aloud, "when a man has so few things that he really can do, to deny his skill in the one he knows best."

"I am quite ready, sir," said Polly, in that tone of determination which she was often accustomed to assume, and against which her father rarely or never disputed.

"There now, Fagan; get up into the rumble. I'll not ask you to be the coachman. Come come — no more opposition; we shall make them impatient if we keep them standing much longer."

As he spoke, he offered his arm to Polly, who, with a smile — the first she had deigned to give him — accepted it, and then hastily leading her forward, he

handed her into the carriage. In an instant MacNaghten was beside her. With the instinct of hot-tempered cattle, they no sooner felt a hand upon the reins, than they became eager to move forward, and, while one pawed the ground with impatience, the other, retiring to the very limit of the pole-strap, prepared for a desperate plunge.

"Up with you, Fagan; be quick — be quick!" cried Dan. "It won't do to hold them in. Let them go, lads, or they'll smash everything!" And the words were hardly out, when, with a tremendous bound, that carried the front wheels off the road, away they went. "Meet us at the other gate — they'll show you the way," cried MacNaghten, as, standing up, he pointed with his whip in the direction he meant. He had no time for more; for all his attention was now needed to the horses, as, each exciting the other, they dashed madly on down the road.

"This comes of keeping them standing," muttered Dan; "and the scoundrels have curbed them up too tight. You're not afraid, Miss Polly? By Jove, that was a dash — Kitty showed her heels over the splash-board. Look at that devil Dan — see how he's bearing on the pole-piece! — an old trick of his.

A tremendous cut on his flank now drove him almost furious, and the enraged animal set off at speed.

"We must let them blow themselves, Miss Polly. It all comes of their standing so long. — You're not afraid? — Well, then, they may do their worst."

By this time the pace had become a tearing gallop, and seeing that nothing short of some miles would suffice to tame them down, MacNaghten turned their

heads in the direction of a long avenue, which led towards the sea.

It was all in vain that Fagan hastened through the flower-garden, and across a private shrubbery; when he reached the "gate," there was no sign of the phaeton. The cuckoo and the thrush were the only voices heard in the stillness; and, at intervals, the deep booming of the sea, miles distant, told how unbroken was the silence around. His mind was a conflict of fear and anger; terrible anxieties for his daughter were mixed up with passion at this evidence of her wayward nature; and he walked along, reproaching himself bitterly for having accepted the civilities of Mac Naghten.

Fagan's own schemes for a high alliance for his daughter had made him acquainted with many a counter-plot of adventurers against himself. He well knew what a prize Polly Fagan was deemed amongst the class of broken-down and needy spendthrifts who came to him for aid. Often and often had he detected the first steps of such machinations, till, at length, he had become suspectful of everything and everybody. Now, MacNaghten was exactly the kind of man he most dreaded in this respect. There was that recklessness about him that comes of broken fortune; he was the very type of a desperate adventurer, ready to seize any chance to restore himself to fortune and independence. Who could answer for such a man in such an emergency?

Driven almost mad with these terrors, he now hastened his steps, stopping at times to listen, and at times calling on his daughter in the wildest accents. Without knowing whither he went, he soon lost him-

self in the mazes of the wood, and wandered on for hours in a state bordering upon distraction. Suspicion had so mastered his reason that he had convinced himself the whole was a deliberate scheme — that MacNaghten had planned all beforehand. In his disordered fancies, he did not scruple to accuse his daughter of complicity, and inveighed against her falsehood and treachery in the bitterest words. And what was Dan MacNaghten doing all this time? Anything, everything, in short, but what he was accused of! In good truth, he had little time for love-making, had such a project even entered his head, so divided were his attentions between the care of the cattle and his task of describing the different scenes through which they passed at speed — the prospect being like one of those modern inventions called dissolving views — no sooner presenting an object than superseding it by another. In addition to all this, he had to reconcile Miss Polly to what seemed a desertion of her father; so that, what with his "cares of coachman, cicerone, and consoler," as he himself afterwards said, it was clean beyond him to slip in even a word on his own part. It is no part of my task to inquire how Polly enjoyed the excursion, or whether the dash of recklessness, so unlike every incident of her daily life, did not repay her for any discomfort of her father's absence: certain is it that when, after about six miles traversed in less than half an hour, they returned to the Castle, her first sense of apprehension was felt by not finding her father to meet her. No sooner had MacNaghten conducted her to the library than he set out himself in search of Fagan, having despatched messengers in all directions on the same errand. Dan, it must be owned, had far rather

have remained to reassure Miss Polly, and convince her that her father's absence would be but momentary; but he felt that it was a point of duty with him to go — and go he did.

It chanced that, by dint of turning and winding, Fagan had at length approached the Castle again, so that MacNaghten came up with him within a few minutes after his search began. "Safe, and where?" were the only words the old man could utter as he grasped the other's arm. Dan, who attributed the agitation to but one cause, proceeded at once to reassure him on the score of his daughter's safety, detailing, at the same time, the circumstances which compelled him to turn off in a direction the opposite of that he intended. Fagan drank in every word with eagerness, his grey eyes piercingly fixed on the speaker all the while. Great as was his agitation throughout, it became excessive when MacNaghten chanced to allude to Polly personally, and to speak of the courage she displayed.

"She told you that she was not afraid? — she said so to yourself?" — cried he, eagerly.

"Ay, a dozen times," replied Dan, freely. "It was impossible to have behaved better."

"You said so — you praised her for it, I have no doubt," said the other, with a grim effort at a smile.

"To be sure I did, Tony. By Jove, you've reason to be proud of her. I don't speak of her beauty, that every one can see; but she's a noble-minded girl. She would grace any station in the land."

"She heard you say as much with pleasure, I'm certain," said Fagan, with a smile that was more than half a sneer.

"Nay, faith, Tony, I did not go so far. I praised her courage. I told her that not every man could have behaved so bravely."

MacNaghten paused at this.

"And then — and then, sir," cried Fagan, impatiently.

Dan turned suddenly towards him, and to his amazement beheld a countenance tremulous with passionate excitement.

"What then, sir? Tell me what then. I have a right to ask, and I will know it. I'm her father, and I demand it."

"Why, what in Heaven's name is the matter?" exclaimed MacNaghten. "I have told you she is safe — that she is yonder."

"I speak not of that, sir; and you know it," cried Fagan, imperiously. "The dissimulation is unworthy of you. You ought to be a man of honour."

"Egad, good temper would be the best quality for me just now," said the other, with a smile; "for you seem bent on testing it."

"I see it all," cried Fagan, in a voice of anguish. "I see it all. Now hear me, Mr. MacNaghten. You are one who has seen much of the world, and will readily comprehend me. You are a man reputed to be kind-hearted, and you will not pain me by affecting a misunderstanding. Will you leave this to-morrow, and go abroad, say for a year or two? Give me your hand on it, and draw on me for one thousand pounds."

"Why, Tony, what has come over you? Is it the air of the place has disordered your excellent faculties? What can you mean?"

"This is no answer to my question, sir," said Fagan, rudely.

"I cannot believe you serious in putting it," said MacNaghten, half proudly "Neither you nor any other man has the right to make such a proposal to me."

"I say that I have, sir. I repeat it. I am her father, and by one dash of my pen she is penniless to-morrow. Ay, by Heaven, it is what I will do if you drive me to it."

"At last I catch your meaning," said MacNaghten, "and I see where your suspicions have been pointing at. No, no; keep your money. It might be a capital bargain for me, Tony, if I had the conscience to close with it, and if you knew but all, you've no right to offer so much temptation. The path will bring you to the Castle. You'll find Miss Polly in the library. Good bye, Fagan."

And without waiting for a reply, MacNaghten turned abruptly away, and disappeared in the wood.

Fagan stood for a second or two deep in thought, and then bent his steps towards the Castle.

CHAPTER V.

Joe Raper.

The little incident which forms the subject of the last chapter occurred some weeks before my father's return to Ireland, and while as yet the fact of his marriage was still a secret to all, save his most intimate friends. The morning after Fagan's visit, however, MacNaghten received a few lines from my father, desiring him to look after and "pass" through the Custom

House certain packages of value which would arrive there about that time. It chanced that poor Dan's circumstances just at this moment made seclusion the safer policy, and so he forwarded the commission to Fagan.

The packages contained the wardrobe of Madam de Carew, and revealed the mystery of my father's marriage. Fagan's plans and speculations must have attained to a great maturity in his own mind, to account for the sudden shock which this intelligence gave him. He was habitually a cautious calculator, rarely or never carried away by hope beyond the bounds of stern reality, and only accepting the "probable" as the "possible." In this instance, however, he must have suffered himself a wider latitude of expectation, for the news almost stunned him. Vague as were the chances of obtaining my father for a son-in-law, they were yet fair subjects of speculation; and he felt like one who secures a great number of tickets in a lottery, to augment his likelihood to win. Despite of all this, he had now to bear the disappointment of a "blank." The great alliance on which he had built all his hopes of position and station, was lost to him for ever; and unable to bear up against the unexpected stroke of fortune, he feigned illness and withdrew.

It is very difficult for some men to sever the pain of a disappointment from a sense of injury towards the innocent cause of it. Unwilling to confess that they have calculated ill, they turn their anger into some channel apart from themselves. In the present case, Fagan felt as if my father had done him a foul wrong: as though he had been a party to the deceit he practised on himself, and had actually traded on the hopes

which stirred his own heart. He hastened home, and, passing through the little shop, entered the dingy parlour behind it.

At a large, high desk, at each side of which stood innumerable pigeon-holes crammed with papers, a very diminutive man was seated writing. His suit of snuff-brown was worn and threadbare, but scrupulously clean, as was also the large cravat of spotless white which inclosed his neck like a pillory. His age might have been about fifty one or two; some might have guessed him more, for his features were cramped and contracted with wrinkles, which, with the loss of one of his eyes from small-pox, made him appear much older than he was. His father had been one of the first merchants of Dublin, in whose ruin and bankruptcy, it was said, Fagan's father had a considerable share. The story also ran, that Joe Raper — such was his name — had been the accepted suitor of her who subsequently married Fagan. The marriage having been broken off when these disasters became public, young Raper was forced by poverty to relinquish his career as a student of Trinity College, and become a clerk in Fagan's office, and an inmate of his house. In this station he had passed youth and manhood, and was now growing old; his whole ambition in life being to see the daughter of his former sweetheart grow up in beauty and accomplishments, and to speculate with himself on some great destiny in store for her. Polly's mother had died within two years after her marriage, and to her child had Joe transmitted all the love and affection he had borne to herself. He had taken charge of her education from infancy, and had laboured hard himself to acquire such knowledge as might keep him in advance of his gifted

pupil. But for this self-imposed task it is more than likely that all his little classic lore had been long forgotten, and that the graceful studies of his earlier days had been obliterated by the wear and tear of a life so little in unison with them. To be her teacher, he had toiled through the long hours of the night, hoarding up his miserable earnings to buy some coveted book of reference — some deeply-prized authority in criticism. By dint of downright labour — for his was not one of those bright intelligences that acquire as if by instinct — he had mastered several of the modern languages of Europe, and refreshed his knowledge of the ancient ones. With such companionship and such training, Polly Fagan's youth had been fashioned into that strange compound, where high ambitions and gentle tastes warred with each other, and the imaginative faculties were cultivated amidst views of life alone suggestive of gain and money-getting.

If Fagan took little interest in the care bestowed by Raper on his daughter's education, he was far from indifferent to the devotion of his faithful follower; while Joe, on the other hand, well knowing that without him the complicated business of the house could not be carried on for a single day, far from presuming on his indispensable services, only felt the more bound in honour to endure any indignity rather than break with one so dependent on him. It had been a kind of traditionary practice with the Fagans not to keep regular books, but to commit all their transactions to little fragments of paper, which were stuffed, as it seemed, recklessly, into some one or other of that vast nest of pigeon-holes, which, like a gigantic honeycomb, formed the background of Joe Raper's desk, and of

which he alone, of men, knew the secret geography. No guide existed to these mysterious receptacles, save when occasionally the name of some suitor of uncommon importance appeared over a compartment; and, as in evidence of what a share our family enjoyed in such distinction, I have heard that the word "Carew" figured over as many as five of these little cells.

Joe turned round hastily on his stool as his chief entered, and saluted him with a respectful bow; and then, as if continuing some unbroken thread of discourse, said, "Whyte is protested — Figgis and Read stopped."

"What of Grogan?" said Fagan, harshly.

"Asks for time. If he sells his stock at present prices, he'll be a heavy loser."

"So let him — say that we'll proceed."

"The writ can't run there, he lives in Mayo."

"We'll try it."

"We did so before, and the sub-sheriff was shot."

"Attorneys are plenty — we'll send down another."

"Humph!" muttered Joe, as he turned over a folio of papers before him. "Ay, here it is," said he. "Oliver Moore wishes to go to America, and will give up his lease; he only begs that you will vouchsafe to him some small compensation —"

"Compensation! That word is one of yours, Mr. Raper, and, I've no doubt, has a classical origin — you got it in Homer, perhaps; but, let me tell you, sir, that it is a piece of vulgar cant, and, what is worse, a swindle! Ay, grow pale if you like; but I'll repeat the word — a swindle! When a man wants to sell a pair of old boots, does he think of charging for all the blacking he has put on them for the three years

before? And yet that is precisely what you dignify with the name of compensation. Tell him if he built a house, that he lived in it; if he fenced the land, that the neighbours' cattle made fewer trespasses; if he drained, the soil was the drier. Your cry of compensation won't do, Raper. I might as well ask an insurance office to pay me for taking care of my health, and give me a bonus whenever I took castor-oil!"

"The cases are not alike, sir. If his improvements be of a permanent character — —"

"Is this an office, Mister Raper, or is it a debating society?" broke in Fagan. "My answer to Moore is, pay, and go — to the devil, if he likes."

"Sir Harry Wheeler," continued Joe, "writes from Cheltenham, that he thinks there must be a mistake about the bill for three hundred and forty odd — that it was included in the bond he gave in September last."

"File a bill, send for Crowther, and let him proceed against him."

"But I think he's right, sir; the memorandum is somewhere here. I put it amongst the W's; for we have no box for Sir Harry."

"It's a nice way to keep accounts, Mister Raper; I must say it's very creditable to you," said Fagan; who, when any inaccuracy occurred, always reproached Joe with the system that he rigidly compelled him to follow.

"Perhaps it's classical, however; maybe it's the way the ancients did it! But I'll tell you what, sir — you'd cut an ugly figure before the courts if you came to be examined; your Latin and Greek wouldn't screen you there."

"Here it is — here's the note," said Joe, who had

all the while been prosecuting his search. "It's in your own hand, and mentions that this sum forms a portion of the debt now satisfied by his bond."

"Cancel the bill, and tell him so. What's that letter, yonder?"

"It is marked 'strictly private and confidential,' sir; but comes from Walter Carew, Esq."

"Then, why not give it to me at once? — why keep pottering about every trifle of no moment, sir?" said Fagan, as he broke the seal, and drew near to the window to read. It was very brief, and ran thus: —

"Dear Fagan, — Shylock couldn't hold a candle to you — such an infernal mess of interest, compound interest, costs, and commission, as you have sent me, I never beheld! However, for the present, I must endure all your exactions, even to the tune of fifty per cent. Let me have cash for the inclosed three bills, for one thousand each, drawn at the old dates, and of course, to be 'done' at the old discount.

"I have just taken a wife, and am in want of ready money to buy some of the customary tomfooleries of the occasion. Regards to Polly and her fat terrier. — Yours in haste.

"Walter Carew."

"Read that," said Fagan, handing the letter to his clerk, while the veins in his forehead swelled out with passion, and his utterance grew hoarse and thick.

Raper carefully perused the note, and then proceeded to examine the bills, when Fagan snatched them rudely from his hand.

"It was his letter I bade you read — the gross

insolence of his manner of addressing me. Where's his account, Raper? How does he stand with us?"

"That's a long affair to make out," said Joe, untying a thick roll of papers.

"I don't want details. Can you never understand that? Tell me in three words how he stands."

"Deeply indebted — very deeply indebted, sir," said Joe, poring over the papers.

"Tell Crowther to come over this evening at six o'clock, and write to Carew by this post, thus: —

"'Mr. Fagan regrets that in the precarious condition of the money market, he is obliged to return you the bills, herewith inclosed, without acceptance. Mr. F., having some large and pressing claims to meet, desires to call your attention to the accompanying memorandum, and to ask at what early period it will be your convenience to make an arrangement for its settlement.'"

"Make out an account and furnish it, Raper; we'll see how he relishes Shylock when he comes to read that."

Joseph sat with the pen in his hand as if deep in thought.

"Do you hear me, Raper?" asked Fagan, in a harsh voice.

"I do," said the other, and proceeded to write.

"There's a judgment entered upon Carew's bond of February — isn't there?"

"There is! Crowther has it in his office."

"That's right. We'll see and give him a pleasant honeymoon." And with these words, uttered with an almost savage malevolence, he passed out into the street.

Joe Raper's daily life was a path on which the sunlight seldom fell; but this day it seemed even darker than usual, and as he sat and wrote, many a heavy sigh broke from him, and more than once did he lay down his pen and draw his hand across his eyes. Still he laboured on, his head bent down over his desk, in that selfsame spot where he had spent his youth, and was now dropping down into age, unnoticed and unthought of. Of those who came and went from that dreary room, who saw and spoke with him, how many were there who knew him — who even suspected what lay beneath that simple exterior! To some he was but the messenger of dark tidings, the agent of those severe measures which Fagan not unfrequently employed against his clients. To others he seemed a cold, impassive, almost misanthropic being, without a tie to bind him to his fellow-man; while not a few even ascribed to his influences all the harshness of the "Grinder." It is more than likely that he never knew of — never suspected the different judgments thus passed on him. So humbly did he think of himself — so little disposed was he to fancy that he could be an object of attention to any, the chances are that he was spared this source of mortification. Humility was the basis of his whole character, and by its working was every action of his simple life influenced. It might be a curious subject of inquiry how far this characteristic was fashioned by his habits of reading and of thought. Holding scarcely any intercourse with the world of society — companionless as he was, his associates were the great writers of ancient or modern times — the mighty spirits whose vast conceptions have created a world of their own. Living amongst them — animated

by their glorious sentiments — feeling their thoughts — breathing their words — how natural that he should have fallen back upon himself with a profound sense of his inferiority! How meanly must he have thought of his whole career in life in presence of such standards!

Upon this day Joe never once opened a book; the little volumes which lay scattered through his drawers were untouched, nor did he, as was his wont, turn for an instant to refresh himself in the loved pages of Metastasio, or of Uhland. Whenever he had more than usual on hands, it was his custom not to dine with the family, but to eat something as he sat at his desk. Such was his meal now — a little bread and cheese, washed down by a glass of water.

"Miss Polly hopes you'll take a glass of wine, Mr. Joe," said a maid-servant, as she appeared with a decanter in her hand.

"No! Thanks — thanks to Miss Polly; many thanks — and to you, Margaret — not to-day. I have a good deal to do." And he resumed his work with that air of determination the girl well knew brooked no interruption.

It was full an hour after sunset when he ceased writing; and then, laying his head down between his hands, he slept — the sound, heavy sleep that comes of weariness. Twice or thrice had the servant to call him before he could awake, and hear that "Miss Polly was waiting tea for him."

"Waiting for me," cried he, in mingled shame and astonishment. "How forgetful I am — how very wrong of me! Is Mr. Crowther here, Margaret?"

"He came an hour ago, sir."

"Dear me, how I have forgotten myself!" And he began gathering up his papers, the hard task of the day, in all haste. "Say, I'm coming, Margaret — tell Miss Polly I'm so sorry." And thus, with many an excuse and in great confusion, Raper hurried out of the office and upstairs into the drawing-room.

Fagan's house was, perhaps, the oldest in the street, and was remarkable for possessing one of those quaint, old-fashioned windows, which projecting over the door beneath, formed a species of little boudoir, with views extending on either side. Here it was Polly's pleasure to sit, and here she now presided at her tea-table; while in a remote corner of the room her father and Mr. Crowther were deep in conversation.

"Have you finished the statement? — where's the account?" cried Fagan, roughly interrupting the excuses that Raper was making for his absence.

"Here it is; at least so far as I was able to make it. Many of our memoranda, however, only refer to verbal arrangements, and allude to business matters transacted personally between you and Mr. Carew."

"Listen to him, Crowther; just hear what he says," said Fagan, angrily. "Is not that a satisfactory way to keep accounts?"

"Gently, gently — let us go quietly to work," said Crowther — a large, fat, unwieldy man, with a bloated, red face, and an utterance rendered difficult from the combined effects of asthma and over-eating. "Raper is generally most correct, and your own memory is admirable. If Miss Polly will give me a cup of her strongest tea, without any sugar, I'll answer for it I'll soon see my way."

When Raper had deposited the mass of papers on

the table, and presented the cup of tea to Crowther, he stole, half timidly, over to where Polly sat.

"You must be hungry, Papa Joe" — it was the name by which she called him in infancy — "for you never appeared at dinner. Pray eat something now."

"I have no appetite, Polly; that is, I have eaten already. I'm quite refreshed," said he, scarcely thinking of what he said, for his eyes were directed to the table where Crowther was seated, and where a kind of supercilious smile on the attorney's face seemed evoked by something in the papers before him.

"Some cursed folly of his own — some of that blundering nonsense that he fills his brains with!" cried Fagan, as he threw indignantly away a closely-written sheet of paper, the lines of which unmistakably proclaimed verse.

Joe eyed the unhappy document wistfully for a second or two, and then, with a stealthy step, he crept over, and threw it into the hearth.

"I found out the passage, Polly," said he, in a whisper, so as not to disturb the serious conference of the others; and he drew a few well-thumbed leaves from his pocket, and placed them beside her, while she bent over them, till her glossy ringlets touched the page.

"This is the Medea," said she; "but we have not read that yet."

"No, Polly; you remember that we kept it for the winter nights — we agreed Tieck and Chamisso were better for summer evenings — 'Quando ridono i prati,' as Petrarch says;" and her eyes brightened, and her cheek glowed as he spoke. "How beautiful was that walk we took on Sunday evening last — that little

glen beside the river, so silent, so still, who could think it within a mile or two of a great city? What a delightful thing it is to think, Polly, that they who labour hard in the week — and there are so many of them! — can yet on that one day of rest wander forth and taste of the earth's freshness.

" 'L'oro e le perle — i fior vermegli ed i bianchi.' "

"Confound your balderdash!" cried Fagan, passionately; "you've put me out in the tot — seventeen and twelve, twenty-nine — two thousand nine hundred pounds, with the accruing interest. I don't see that he has added the interest."

Mr. Crowther bent patiently over the document for a few minutes, and then, taking off his spectacles, and wiping them slowly, said, in his blandest voice, — "It appears to me that Mr. Raper has omitted to calculate the interest. Perhaps he would kindly vouchsafe us his attention for a moment."

Raper was, however, at that moment deaf to all such appeals; his spirit was as though wandering free beneath the shade of leafy bowers, or along the sedgy banks of some clear lake.

"You remember Dante's lines, Polly; and how he describes —

" 'La divina foresta —
Che agli occhi temperava il nuovo giorno,
Senza piu aspettar lasciai la riva,
Prendendo la campagna lento lento.'

How beautiful the repetition of the word 'lento;' how it conveys the slow reluctance of his step."

"There is, to my thinking, even a more graceful instance in Metastasio," said Polly, —

"'L' onda che mormora,
Fra sponda e sponda,
L' aura che tremola,
Fra fronda e fronda.'"

"Raper, Raper — do you hear me, I say?" cried Fagan, as he knocked angrily with his knuckles on the table.

"We are sorry, Miss Fagan," interposed Crowther, "to interrupt such intellectual pleasure; but business has its imperative claims."

"I'm ready — quite ready, sir," said Joe, rising in confusion, and hastening across the room to where the others sat.

"Take a seat, sir," said Fagan, peremptorily; "for here are some points which require full explanation. And I would beg to remind you, that if the cultivation of your mind, as I have heard it called, interferes with your attention to office duties, it would be as well to seek out some more congenial sphere for its development than my humble house. I'm too poor a man for such luxurious dalliance, Mr. Raper." These words, although spoken in a whisper, were audible to him to whom they were addressed, and he heard them in a state of half-stupified amazement. "For the present, I must call your attention to this. What is it?"

Raper was no sooner in the midst of figures and calculations than all his instincts of office-life recalled him to himself, and he began rapidly but clearly to explain the strange and confused-looking documents which were strewn before him, and Crowther could not but feel struck by the admirable memory and systematic precision which alone could derive information from such disorderly materials. Even Fagan himself was

so carried away by a momentary impulse of enthusiasm as to say, "When a man is capable of such a statement as this, what a disgrace that he should fritter away his faculties with rhymes and legends!"

"Mr. Raper is a philosopher, sir; he despises the base pursuits and grovelling ambitions of us lower mortals," said Crowther, with a well-feigned humility.

"We must beg of him to lay aside his philosophy, then, for this evening, for there is much to be done yet," said Fagan, untying a large bundle of letters. "This is the correspondence of the last year — the most important of all."

"Large sums! large sums, these!" said Crowther, glancing his eyes over the papers. "You appear to have placed a most unlimited confidence in this young gentleman — a very well merited trust I have no doubt."

Fagan made no reply, but a slight contortion of his mouth and eyebrows seemed to offer some dissent to the doctrine.

"I have kept the tea waiting for you, Papa Joe," said Polly, who took the opportunity of a slight pause to address him; and Raper, like an escaped schoolboy, burst away from his task at a word.

"I have just remembered another instance, Polly," said he, "of what we were speaking; it occurs in Schiller —

"'Es bricht sich die Welle mit Macht — mit Macht.'"

"Take your books to your room, Polly," said Fagan, harshly; "for I see that as long as they are here, we have little chance of Mr. Raper's services."

Polly rose, and pressed Joe's hand affectionately,

and then, gathering up the volumes before her, she left the room. Raper stood for a second or two gazing at the door after her departure; and then, heaving a faint sigh, muttered to himself, —

"I have just recalled to mind another, —

" 'Eine Blüth', eine Blüth' mir brich,
Von dem Baum im Garten.'

Quite ready, sir," broke he in suddenly, as a sharp summons from Fagan's knuckles once more admonished him of his duty; and, now, as though the link which had bound him to realms of fancy was snapped, he addressed himself to his task with all the patient drudgery of daily habit.

CHAPTER VI.

Two Friends and their Confidences.

By the details of my last two chapters, I have been obliged to recede, as it were, from the due course of my story, and speak of events which occurred prior to those mentioned in a former chapter; but this irregularity was a matter of necessity, since I could not pursue the narrative of my father's life, without introducing to the reader certain characters, who, more or less, exerted an influence on his fortunes. Let me now, however, turn to my tale, from which it is my intention in future to digress as seldom as possible. A few lines, written in haste, had summoned MacNaghten to Castle Carew, on the morning of that Friday for which my father had invited his friends to dinner. With all his waywardness, and all the weaknesses of an impulsive nature, Dan MacNaghten stood higher in my father's esteem than any other of his

friends. It was not alone that he had given my father the most signal proofs of his friendship, but that, throughout his whole career, marked as it was by folly and rashness, and the most thoughtless extravagance, he had never done a single action that reflected on his reputation as a man of honour, nor, in all the triumphs of his prosperous days, or in the trials of his adverse ones, had he forfeited the regard of any who knew him. My father had entrusted to him, during his absence, everything that could be done without correspondence; for, amongst Dan's characteristics, none was more remarkable than his horror of letter-writing; and it was a popular saying of the time, "that Dan MacNaghten would rather fight two duels than write one challenge." Of course, it may be imagined how much there was for two such friends to talk over, when they met, for, if my father's letters were few and brief, MacNaghten's were still fewer and less explicit, leaving voids on either side that nothing but a meeting could supply.

Early, therefore, that Friday morning, Dan's gig and mottled grey, the last remnant of an extensive stable establishment, rattled up the avenue of Castle Carew, and MacNaghten strolled into the garden, to loiter about, till such time as my father might be stirring. He was not many minutes there, however, when my father joined him, and the two friends embraced cordially, and arm-in-arm returned to the house.

It was not without astonishment Dan saw that the breakfast-table was spread in the same little garden-room which my father always used in his bachelor days, and still more, that only two places were laid.

"You are wondering where's my wife, Dan. She never breakfasts with me; nor indeed, do we see each other till late in the afternoon — a custom, I will own, that I used to rebel against at first, but I'm getting more accustomed to it now; and, after all, Dan, it would be a great sacrifice of all her comfort should I insist on a change; so I put up with it as best I can."

"Perhaps she'll see herself, in time, that these are not the habits here."

"Perhaps so," said my father; "but usually French people think their own ways the rule, and all others the exception. I suppose you were surprised at my marriage, Dan."

"Faith I was, I own to you. I thought you one of those inveterate Irishers that couldn't think of anything but Celtic blood. You remember, when we were boys, how we used to rave on that theme."

"Very true. Like all the grafts, we deemed ourselves purer than the ancient stock; but no man ever knows when, where, or whom he'll marry. It's all nonsense planning and speculating about it. You might as well look out for a soft spot to fall in a steeplechase. You come smash down in the very middle of your speculations. I'm sure, as for me, I never dreamed of a wife till I found that I had one."

"I know so well how it all happened," cried Dan, laughing. "You got up one of those delightful intimacies — that pleasant familiar kind of half-at-homishness that throws a man always off his guard, and leaves him open to every assault of female fascination, just when he fancies that he is the delight of the whole circle. Egad, I've had at least half-a-dozen such, and must have been married at least as many times, if

somebody hadn't discovered, in the meanwhile, that I was ruined."

"So that you never fell in love in your prosperous days, Dan?"

"Who does — who ever did? The minor that wrote sonnets has only to come of age, and feel that he can indite a check, to be cured of his love fever. Love is a passion most intimately connected with laziness and little money. Give a fellow seven or eight thousand a-year, good health and good spirits, and I'll back him to do every other folly in Christendom before he thinks of marriage."

"From all of which I am to conclude that you set down this act of mine either as a proof of a weak mind or a failing exchequer," said my father.

"Not in your case," said he, more slowly, and with a greater air of reflection. "You had always a dash of ambition about you; and the chances are, that you set your affections on one that you half despaired of obtaining, or had really no pretensions to look for. I see I'm right, Walter," said he, as my father fidgetted, and looked confused. "I could have wagered a thousand on it, if I had as much. You entered for the royal plate; and, by Jove! I believe you were right."

"You have not made so bad a guess of it, Dan; but what say the rest? What's the town gossip?"

"Do you not know Dublin as well or better than I do? Can't you frame to a very letter every syllable that has been uttered on the subject — or need I describe to you my Lady Kilfoyle's fan-shaking horror, as she tells of 'that poor dear Carew, and his unfortunate marriage, with Heaven knows whom!' Nor Bob French's astonishment that you, of all men, should

marry out of your sphere — or, as he calls it, your spire. Nor how graphically Mrs. Stapleton Harris narrates the manner of your entanglement — how you fought two brothers, and only gave in to the superior force of an outraged mamma, and the tears of your victim! Nor fifty other similar stories, in which you figured alternately as the dupe or the deceived — the only point of agreement being a universal reprobation of one, who, with all his pretensions to patriotism, should have entirely forgotten the claims of Irish manufacture."

"And are they all so severe — so unjust?"

"Very nearly. The only really warm defender I've heard of you, was one from whom you probably least expected it."

"And who might that be?"

"Can't you guess, Watty?"

"Harry Blake — Redmond — George Macartney?"

"Confound it, you don't think I mean a man."

"A woman — who could she be? Not Sally Talbot; not Lady Jane Rivers; not —"

"Kitty Dwyer; and I think you might have guessed her before, Watty! It is rather late, to be sure, to think of it; but my belief is that you ought to have married that girl."

"She refused me, Dan. She refused me," said my father, growing red, between shame and a sense of irritation.

"There's a way of asking that secures a refusal, Watty. Don't tell me Kitty was not fond of you. I ought to know, for she told me so herself."

"She told you so," cried my father, slowly.

"Ay, did she. It was in the summer-house, down

yonder. You remember the day you gave a great picnic to the Carbiniers; they were ordered off to India, and you asked them out here to a farewell breakfast. Well, I didn't know then how badly matters were with me. I thought, at least, that I could scrape together some thirteen or fourteen hundreds a-year; and I thought, too, that I had a knowledge of the world, that was worth as much more, and that Kitty Dwyer was just the girl that suited me. She was never out of humour — could ride anything that ever was backed — didn't care what she wore — never known to be sick, sulky, nor sorry for anything; and after a country dance that lasted two hours, and almost killed everybody but ourselves, I took her a walk round the gardens, and seated her in the summer-house there. I needn't tell all I said," continued he, with a sigh. "I believe I couldn't have pleaded harder for my life, if it was at stake; but she stopped me short, and, squeezing my hand between both of hers, said — 'No, Dan; this cannot be, and you are too generous to ask me why.' But I was not! I pressed her all the more; and, at last — not without seeing a tear in her eye, too — I got at her secret, and heard her say your name. I swore by every saint we could either of us remember, never to tell this to man or mortal living; and I suppose, in strict fact, I oughtn't to do so now; but, of course, it's the same thing as if you were dead, and you, I well know, will never breathe it again."

"Never!" said my father, and sat with his head on his hand, unable to utter a word more.

"Poor Kitty!" said Dan, with a heavy sigh, while he balanced his spoon on the edge of his tea cup! "I half suspect she is the only one in the world that you

ever seriously wronged, and yet she is the very first to uphold you."

"But you are unjust Dan — most unjust," cried my father, warmly. "There was a kind of flirtation between us — I don't deny it, but nothing more than is always going forward in this free-and-easy land of ours, where people play with their feelings as they do with their fortunes, and are quite astonished to discover, some fine morning, that they have fairly run through both one and the other. I liked her, and she perhaps liked me, somewhat better than any one else that she met as often. We got to become very intimate; to feel, that in the disposal of our leisure hours — which meant the livelong day — we were excessively necessary to each other; in fact, that if our minds were not quite alike, our tastes were. Of course, before one gets that far, one's friends, as they call themselves, have gone far beyond it. There's no need of wearying you with detail. Somebody, I'm sure I forget who it was, now took occasion to tell me, that I was behaving ill to Kitty; that unless I really intended seriously — that's the paraphrase for marriage -- my attentions were calculated to do her injury. Ay, by Jove! your match-making moralists talk of a woman as they would of a horse, and treat a broken flirtation as if it were a breach of warranty. I was, I own it, not a little annoyed at the unnecessary degree of interest my friends insisted on taking in my welfare; but I was not fool enough to go to war with the world single-handed, so I seemed to accept the counsel, and went my way. That same day, I rode out with Kitty. There was a large party of us, but by some chance we found ourselves side by side, and in an avenue of the

wood. Quite full as my mind was of the communication of the morning, I could not resist my usual impulse, which was to talk to her of any or everything that was uppermost in my thoughts. I don't mean to say, Dan, that I did so delicately, or even becomingly, for I confess to you I had grown into that kind of intimacy whose gravest fault is, that it has no reserve. I'm quite certain that nothing could be worse in point of taste or feeling than what I said. You can judge of it from her reply — 'And are you such a fool, Walter, as to cut an old friend for such silly gossip?' I blundered out something in defence of myself — floundered away into all kinds of stupid unmeaning apologies, and ended by asking her to marry me. Up to that moment we were conversing in all the freedom of our old friendship — not the slightest reserve on either side; but no sooner had I uttered these words, than she turned towards me with a look so sad, and so reproachful, I did not believe that her features could have conveyed the expression, while, in a voice of deepest emotion, she said — 'Oh, Walter, this from you!' I was brute enough — there's only one word for it — to misunderstand her; and, full of myself, and the splendid offer I had made her, and my confounded amour propre, I muttered something about the opinion of the world, the voice of friends, and so on. 'Tell your friends, then,' said she, and with such an emphasis on the word! — 'tell your friends that I refused you!' and giving her mare a tremendous cut of the whip, she dashed off at speed, and was up with the others before I had even presence of mind to follow her."

"You behaved devilish badly — infamously. If I'd

been her brother, I'd have shot you like a dog!" cried Dan, rising, and walking the room.

"I see it," said my father, covering his face with his handkerchief.

"I am sorry I said that, Watty — I don't mean that," said Dan, laying his hand on my father's shoulder. "It all comes of that infernal system of interference! If they had left you alone, and to the guidance of your own feelings, you'd never have gone wrong. But the world will poke in its d—d finger everywhere. Its rather hard, when good breeding protests against the by-stander meddling with your game at chess, that he should have the privilege of obtruding on the most eventful incident of your existence."

"Let us never speak of this again, Dan," said my father, looking up with eyes that were far from clear.

Mac Naghten squeezed his hand, and said nothing.

"What have you been doing with Tony Fagan, Dan?" said my father, suddenly. "Have you drawn too freely on the Grinder, and exhausted the liberal resources of his free-giving nature?"

"Nothing of the kind; he has closed his books against me this many a day. But why do you ask this?"

"Look here!" And he opened a drawer, and showed a whole mass of papers, as he spoke. "Fagan, whom I regarded as an undrainable well of the precious metals, threatens to run dry; he sends me back bills unaccepted, and actually menaces me with a reckoning."

"What a rascal, not to be satisfied with forty or fifty per cent."

"He might have charged sixty, Dan, if he would only 'order the bill to lie on the table.' But see, he talks of a settlement, and even hints at a lawyer."

"You ought to have married Polly."

"Pray, is there any one else that I should have married, Dan?" cried my father, half angrily; "for it seems to me that you have quite a passion for finding out alliances for me."

"Polly, they say, will have three hundred thousand pounds," said Dan, slowly, "and is a fine girl to boot. I assure you, Watty, I saw her, the other day, seated in the library here, and with all the splendour of your stained-glass windows, your gold-fretted ceiling, and your gorgeous tapestries, she looked just in her place. Hang me if there was a particle of the picture in better style or taste than herself."

"How came she here?" cried my father in amazement. And MacNaghten now related all the circumstances of Fagan's visit, the breakfast, and the drive.

"And you actually sat with three hundred thousand pounds at your side," said my father, "and did not decamp with it?"

"I never said she had the money in her pocket, Watty. Egad! that would have been a very tempting situation."

"How time must have changed you, Dan, when you could discuss the question thus calmly! I remember the day when you'd have won the race, without even wasting a thought on the solvency of the stakeholder."

"Faith I believe it were the wisest way after all, Watty," said he, carelessly: "but the fact is, in the times you speak of, my conscience, like a generous

banker, never refused my drafts; now, however, she has taken a circumspect turn, and I'm never quite certain that I have not overdrawn my account with her. In plain words, I could not bring myself to do with premeditation what once I might have done from recklessness."

"And so the scruple saved Polly?" cried my father.

"Just so; not that I had much time to reflect on it, for the blacks were pulling fearfully, and Dan had smashed his splinter-bar with a kick. Still, in coming up by the new shrubbery there, I did say to myself — 'which road shall I take?' The ponies were going to decide the matter for me; but I turned them short round with a jerk and laid the whip over their flanks with a cut — the dearest assuredly I ever gave to horseflesh, for it cost me, in all likelihood, three hundred thousand."

"Who'd have ever thought Dan MacNaghten's conscience would have been so expensive!"

"By Jove, Watty, it's the only thing of value remaining to me. Perhaps my creditors left it on the same polite principle that they allow a respectable bankrupt to keep his snuff-box or his wife's miniature — a cheap complaisance that reads well in the newspapers."

"The Grinder, of course, thought he had seen the last of you," said my father, laughing.

"He as much as said so to me when I came back. He even went further," said Dan, reddening with anger as he spoke. "He proposed to me to go abroad and travel, and that he would pay the cost; but he'll scarcely repeat the insolence."

"Why, what has come over you all here? I scarcely know you for what I left you some short time back. Dan MacNaghten taking to scruples and Tony Fagan to generosity, seem, indeed, too much for common credulity! And now as to politics, Dan? What are our friends doing? — for I own to you I have not opened one of Bagwell's letters since I left Paris."

"You're just as wise as if you had. Tom has got into all that Rotundo cant about the 'Convention,' and the 'Town Council' and the 'Sub-Committee of Nine,' so that you'd not make anything out of the correspondence. I believe the truth is, that the Bishop is mad, and they who follow him are fools. The Government at first thought of buying them over, but they now perceive it's a cheaper and safer expedient to leave them to themselves and their own indiscretions. But I detest the subject, and as we'll have nothing else talked of to-day at dinner, I'll cry truce, till then. Let us have a look at the stable, Watty. I want to talk to you about the 'nags.'" And so saying, Mac-Naghten arose from table, and, taking my father's arm, led him away into the garden.

CHAPTER VII.

Showing how Chance is better than Design.

It was not the custom of the day for the lady of the house to present herself at dinner when the party consisted solely of men, so that my mother's absence from table appeared nothing remarkable. To her, however, it did seem somewhat singular that, although she descended to the drawing-room in all the charming elegance of a most becoming costume, not one of the

guests presented himself to pay his respects, or, as she would have said, his dutiful homage. It is possible that my father had forgotten to apprize her that the company of a dinner-party were not usually in that temperate and discreet frame of mind which would make their appearance in a drawing-room desirable. In his various lessons, it is more than likely that this escaped him; and I believe I am not far wrong in wishing that many other of his instructions had shared the same fate. The fact was, that in preparing my mother for the duties and requirements of a novel state of society, he had given her such false and exaggerated notions of the country and the people, she had imbibed a hundred absurd prejudices about them which, had she been left to her own unguided good sense and tact, she would have totally escaped; and while, as he thought, he was storing her mind with a thorough knowledge of Ireland, he was simply presenting her with a terrifying picture of such inconsistency, incongruity, and wrongheadedness, that no cleverness on her part could ever succeed in combatting.

It is perfectly true that the courtly deference and polished reserve of old French manners, its thousand observances, and its unfailing devotion to ladies, were not the striking features of Irish country-house life: but there was a great deal in common between them, and, perhaps, no country of Europe in that day could so easily, and with such little sacrifice, have conformed to the French standard of good breeding as Ireland; and, I have little doubt, that if left to herself, my mother would have soon discovered the points of contact, without even troubling her head or puzzling her ingenuity over their discrepancies. However that may

be, there she sat, in all the attractive beauty of full-dress, alone and in silence, save when the door of the distant dinner-room opening bore to her ears the wild and vociferous merriment of a party excited by wine and conviviality.

I know not, I can but fancy, what thoughts of her own dear land were hers at that moment — what memory of delicious evenings spent amidst alleys of orange and lime-trees, the rippling fountain mingling its sounds with the more entrancing music of flattery; what visions rose before her of scenes endeared from infancy, of objects that recalled that soft, luxurious dalliance which makes of life a dream. I can but imagine that of this kind were her reveries, as she sat in solitude, or slowly paced up and down the immense room which, but partially lighted up, looked even larger than it was. To cut off every clue to her family, my father had sent back from England the maid who accompanied her, and taken in her place one who knew nothing of my mother's birth or connexions, so that she had not even the solace of so much confidential intercourse, and was, utterly, completely alone. While in Wales she had been my father's companion for the entire day, accompanying him when he walked or rode, and beside him on the river's bank, as he fished; scarcely had they arrived in Ireland, however, when the whole course of life was changed. The various duties of his station took up much of his time, he was frequently occupied all the day, and they met but rarely; hence had she adopted those old habits of her native country — that self-indulgent system, which surrounds itself with few cares, fewer duties, and, alas! no resources!

So fearful was my father that she might take a dislike to the country from the first impressions produced upon her by new acquaintances, that he actually avoided every one of his neighbours, hesitating where or with whom to seek companionship for his wife — some were too old, some too vulgar, some were linked with an objectionable "set," some were of the opposite side in politics. His fastidiousness increased with every day; and while he was assuring her that there was a delightful circle into which she would be received, he was gradually offending every one of his old neighbours and associates. Of the great heap of cards which covered her table, she had not yet seen one of the owners, and already a hundred versions were circulated to account for the seclusion in which she lived.

I have been obliged to burthen my reader with these explanations, for whose especial enlightenment they are intended, for I desire that he should have as clear an idea of the circumstances which attended my mother's position as I am able to convey, and without which he would be probably unjust in his estimate of her character. In all likelihood there is not any one less adapted to solitude than a young, very handsome, and much-flattered French woman. Neither her education nor her tastes fit her for it; and the very qualities which secure her success in society, are precisely those which most contribute to melancholy when alone. Wit and brilliancy, when isolated from the world, being like the gold and silver money which the ship-wrecked sailor would willingly have bartered for the commonest and vilest articles of simple utility.

Let the reader, then, bearing all this in his mind, picture to himself my mother, who, as the night wore

on, became more and more impatient, starting at every noise, and watching the door, which she momentarily expected to see open.

During all this time, the company of the dinner-room were in the fullest enjoyment of their conviviality — and let me add, too, of that species of conviviality for which the Ireland of that day was celebrated. It is unhappily too true: those habits of dissipation prevailed to such an extent, that a dinner-party meant an orgie; but it is only fair to remember, that it was not a mere festival of debauch, but that native cleverness and wit — the able conversationalist — the brilliant talker, and the lively narrator, had no small share in the intoxication of the hour. There was a kind of barbaric grandeur in the Irish country gentleman of the time — with his splendid retinue, his observance of the point of honour, his contempt of law, and his generous hospitality — that made him a very picturesque, if not a very profitable, feature of his native country. The exact period to which I refer was remarkable in this respect; the divisions of politics had risen to all the dignity of a great national question, and the rights of Ireland were then on trial.

It is not my object, perhaps as little would it be the reader's wish, to enter on any description of the table-talk — where debates in the house, duels, curious assize cases, hard runs with fox-hounds, adventures with bailiffs, and affairs of gallantry, all followed pell-mell, in wild succession. None were above telling of their own defeats and discomfitures. There was little of that overweening self-esteem which in our time stifles many a good story, for fear of the racy ridicule that is sure to follow it. Good fellowship and good temper

were supreme, and none felt that to be offence which was uttered in all the frank gaiety of the bottle. Even then the western Irishman had his distinctive traits; and while the taste for courtly breeding and polished manners was gradually extending, he took a kind of pride in maintaining his primitive habits of dress and demeanour, and laughed at the new-fangled notions as a fashionable folly that would last its hour and disappear again. Of this school was a certain Mr., or rather, as he was always called, "Old Bob Ffrench," the familiar epithet of Bitter Bob being his cognomen among friends and intimates. I am unwilling to let my readers suppose, even for a moment, that he really deserved the disparaging prefix. He was, indeed, the very emblem of an easy-tempered, generous-hearted old man, the utmost extent of whose bitterness was the coarseness of a manner that, however common in his own country, formed a strong contrast to the tone of the capital. Although a man of a large fortune and ancient family, in his dress and appearance he looked nothing above the class of a comfortable farmer. His large loose brown coat was decorated with immense silver buttons, and his small clothes, disdaining all aid from braces, displayed a liberal margin of linen over his hips; but his stockings were most remarkable of all, being of lamb's-wool, and of two colours — a light brown and blue, an invention of his own, to make them easy of detection if stolen, but which assuredly secured their safety on better grounds. He was a member of Parliament for a western borough; and despite many peculiarities of diction, and an occasional lapse of grammar, was always listened to with attention in the House, and respected for the undeviating honour and manly

frankness of his character. Bob had been, as usual, an able contributor to the pleasures of the evening; he had sung, told stories, joked, and quizzed every one around him, and even, in a burst of confidence, communicated the heads of a speech he was about to make in the House on the question of reform, when he suddenly discovered that his snuff-box was empty. Now, amongst his many peculiarities, one was the belief that no man in Ireland knew how to apportion the various kinds of tobacco like himself, and Bob's mixture was a celebrated snuff of the time.

To replenish his box he always carried a little canister in his great-coat pocket, but never would entrust the care of this important casket to a servant; so that when he saw that he was "empty," he quietly stole from the room and went in search of his great coat. It was not without some difficulty that he found his way through the maze of rooms and corridors to the antechamber where he had deposited his hat and coat. Having found it at last, however, he set out to retrace his steps; but whether it was that the fresh air of the cool galleries, or the walking, or that the wine was only then producing its effects, certain is it Mr. Ffrench's faculties became wonderfully confused. He thought he remembered a certain door; but, to his misery, there were at least half-a-dozen exactly like it; he knew that he turned off into a passage, but passages and corridors opened on all sides of him. How heartily did he curse the architect that could not build a house like all the world, with a big hall, having the drawing-room to the left and the dinner-room to the right — an easy geography that any one could recollect after dinner as well as before. With many a malediction on all new-

fangled notions, he plodded on, occasionally coming to the end of an impassable gallery, or now straying into rooms in total darkness. "A blessed way to be spending the evening," muttered he to himself; "and maybe, these rascals are quizzing me all this time." Though he frequently stopped to listen, he never could catch the sounds of a conviviality that he well knew was little measured, and hence he opined, that he must have wandered far away from the right track. In the semi-desperation of the moment, he would gladly have made his escape by a window, and trusted to his chance of discovering the hall door, but unfortunately the artifices of a modern window-bolt so completely defied his skill, that even this resource was denied him. "I'll take one 'cast' more," muttered he, "and if that fails, I'll lie down on the first snug place I can find till morning." It became soon evident to him that he had, at least, entered new precincts; for he now found himself in a large corridor, splendidly lighted, and with a rich carpeting on the floor. There were several doors on either side, but although he tried them each in turn, they were all locked. At last he came to a door at the extreme end of the gallery, which opened to his hand, and admitted him into a spacious and magnificently-furnished apartment, partially lit up, and by this deceptive light admitting glimpses of the most rare and costly objects of china, glass, and marble. It needed not the poetising effects of claret to make Bob fancy that this was a fairy palace — but perhaps the last bottle contributed to this effect — for he certainly stood amazed and confounded at a degree of magnificence and splendour with which he had never seen anything to compare. Vainly endeavouring to peer through the

dubious half-light, and see into the remote distance of the chamber, Ffrench reached the middle of the room, when he heard, or thought he heard, the rustling sounds of silk. It was in the days of hoops and ample petticoats. He turned abruptly, and there stood directly in front of what, in his own description, he characterised as "the elegantest crayture ye ever set eyes upon." Young, beautiful, and most becomingly dressed, it is no wonder if my mother did produce a most entrancing effect on his astounded senses. Never for a moment suspecting that his presence was the result of an accident, my mother curtsied very low, and with a voice and a smile of ineffable sweetness, addressed him. Alas! poor Bob's mystifications were not to end here, for she spoke in French, and however distinguished the City of the Tribes might be in many respects, that language was but little cultivated there. He could, therefore, only bow and lay his hand on his heart, and look as much devotion, respect, and admiration as it was in his power to express at that late hour of the evening.

"Perhaps you'll accept of a cup of tea?" said she at length, leading the way towards the table; and as Ffrench said afterwards, that he never declined drink, no matter what the liquor, he readily consented, and took his place beside her on the sofa. Full of all my father's lessons and precepts about the civilities she was to bestow on the Irish gentlemen and their wives, the importance of creating the most favourable impression on them, and ingratiating herself into their esteem, my mother addressed herself to the task in right earnest. Her first care was to become intelligible, and she accordingly spoke in the slowest and most measured manner, so as to give the foreigner every possible facility to

follow her. Her second was to impose as little necessity on her companion for reply as it was possible. She accordingly talked on of Ireland, of the capital, the country, the scenery about them, the peasantry — everything in short that she could think of, and always in a tone of praise and admiration. The single monosyllable "oui" was the whole stock of old Bob's French, but, as he often remarked, "we hear of a man walking from Ballinasloe to Dublin with only tu'pence in his pocket, and I don't see why he should not be able to economise his parts of speech like his pence, and travel through the French dictionary with only one word of it!" Bob's "oui" was uttered, it is true, with every possible variety of tone and expression. It was assent, conviction, surprise, astonishment, doubt, and satisfaction, just as he uttered it. So long debarred from all intercourse with strangers, it is not improbable that my mother was perfectly satisfied with one who gave her the lion's share of the conversation. She certainly seemed to ask for no higher efforts at agreeability than the attention he bestowed, and he often confessed that he could have sat for a twelvemonth listening to her, and fancying to himself all the sweet things that he hoped she was saying to him. Doubtless not ignorant of her success, she was determined to achieve a complete victory, for after upwards of an hour speaking in this manner, she asked him if he liked music. Should she sing for him? The "oui" was of course ready, and without further preface she arose and walked over to the pianoforte. The fascination which was but begun before was now completed, for, however weak his appreciation of her conversational ability, he could, like nearly all his countrymen, feel the most intense delight

in music. It was fortunate, too, that the tastes of that day did not rise beyond those light "chansonettes," those simple melodies which are so easy to execute, that they are within the appreciation of the least educated ears.

Had the incident occurred in our own day, the chances are that some passionate scene from Verdi, or some energetic outburst of despised love or betrayed affection from Donizetti or Meyerbeer, had been the choice, and poor Bob had gone away with a lamentable opinion of musical science, and regret for the days when "singing was preferred to screeching." Happily the ballad was more in vogue then than the bravura, and instead of holding his ears with his hands, Bob felt them tremble with ecstasy as he listened. Enjoying thoroughly a praise so heartily accorded, my mother sung on, song after song — now some bold "romance" of chivalry — now some graceful little air of pastoral simplicity. No matter what the theme, the charm of the singer was over him, and he listened in perfect rapture! There is no saying to what pitch of enthusiasm he might have soared, had he felt the fascination of the words as he appreciated the flood of melody. As it was, so completely was he carried away by his emotions, that in a rapture of admiration and delight he threw himself on his knees, and seizing her hand, covered it with kisses.

"You're an angel; you're the loveliest, sweetest, and most enchanting crayture ——" He had got thus far in his rhapsody when my father entered the room, and throwing himself into a chair, laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Bob! Bob!" cried he, "is this quite fair, I say?"

And the old man, at once alive to the bantering and ridicule to which his adventure would expose him, got slowly up and resumed his seat with a most ludicrous expression of shame on his features.

"There is no necessity of introducing one of my oldest friends to you, Josephine," said my father. "He has already done so without my intervention, and, I must say, he seems to have lost no time in pushing the acquaintance."

"He is quite charming," said my mother. "We had an old Marquis de Villebois so like him, and he was the delight of our neighbourhood in Provence."

"I see what it is now," muttered Ffrench, "you are cutting me up between you; but I deserve it well. I was an old fool — I am ashamed of myself."

"Are you going away?" cried my mother.

"What is she saying?" asked he.

"She asks if you have really the heart to leave her," rejoined my father, laughing.

"Begad you may laugh now, Watty," replied he, in a half angry tone; "but I tell you what it is, you'd neither be so ready with your fun, nor so willing to play interpreter, if old Bob was the same man he was five-and-thirty years ago! No ma'am, he would not," added he, addressing my mother. "But maybe, after all, it's a greater triumph for you to turn an old head than a young one."

He hurried away after this; and although my father followed him, and did all in his power to make him join his companions at table, it was in vain; he insisted on going to his room, probably too full of the pleasant vision he had witnessed to destroy the illusion by the noisy merriment of a drinking party.

Trivial as the event was in itself, it was not without its consequences. Bob Ffrench had spread the fame of my mother's beauty and accomplishments over Dublin before the following week closed, and nothing else was talked of in the society of the capital. My father, seeing that all further reserve on his part was out of the question, and being satisfied besides that my mother had acquitted herself most successfully in a case of more than ordinary difficulty, resolved on leaving the rest to fortune.

From all that I have ever heard of the society of the time, and from what has reached me by description of my mother's manner and deportment, I am fully convinced that she was exactly the person to attain an immense popularity with all classes. The natural freshness and gaiety of her character, aided by beauty, and the graceful duties of a hostess — which she seemed to fill as by an instinct — made her the object of universal admiration, a homage which, I believe, it was not difficult to see was even more pleasing to my father than to herself.

Castle Carew was from this time crowded with visitors, who, strangely enough, represented the most opposite sections of politics and party. My father's absence during some of the most exciting sessions of parliamentary life, had invested him with a species of neutrality, that made his house an open territory for men of all shades of opinion; and he was but too glad to avail himself of the privilege to form acquaintance with the most distinguished leaders of opposite sections of the House; and here were now met the Castle officials, the chiefs of opposition, the violent antagonists of debate, not sorry, perhaps, for even this momentary

truce in the strife and conflict of a great political campaign.

CHAPTER VIII.

A State Trumpeter.

The 27th of May, 1782, was the day on which Parliament was to assemble in Dublin, and under circumstances of more than ordinary interest. The great question of the independence of the Irish Legislature was then to be discussed and determined; and never was the national mind so profoundly excited as when that time drew near. They who have only known Ireland in a later period, when her political convulsions have degenerated into low sectarian disputes — irregular irruptions, headed by men of inferior ability, and stimulated solely by personal considerations — can scarcely form any idea of Dublin in the days of the Volunteers. It was not alone that the Court of the Viceroy was unusually splendid, or that the presence of the Parliament crowded the capital with all the country could boast of wealth, station, and influence; but that the pomp and parade of a powerful army added brilliancy and grandeur to a spectacle which, for the magnitude of the interests at stake, and the genius and capacity of those that controlled them, had not its superior in Europe.

The position of England at the moment was pregnant with anxiety; at war with two powerful nations, she had more than ever reason to conciliate the feelings and consult the wishes of Ireland. The modern theory of English necessity being Irish opportunity, had not the same prevalence then as in our own day, but still

it had some followers, not one of whom more profoundly believed the adage, or was more prepared to stake fortune on the issue, than our acquaintance, Anthony Fagan.

If the Grinder was not possessed of very sage and statesmanlike opinions on politics generally, he was, on Irish questions, fully as far advanced as the patriots of our own time; his creed of "Ireland for the Irish" comprising every article of his political belief, with this advantage over modern patriotism, that he was immensely rich, and quite ready to employ his wealth in the furtherance of his conviction. He was no needy adventurer, seeking, as the price of a parliamentary display, the position to which mere professional attainments would never have raised him; but a hard-working, slow-thinking, determined man, stimulated by the ambition that is associated with great riches, and stung by the degradation of low birth and proscribed religion.

Such men are dangerous in proportion as they are single-minded. Fagan, with all his sincerity of purpose, failed in this respect, for he was passionate and resentful to an extent which made him often forget everything else but his desire of a personal reparation. This was his great fault, and, strange enough, too, he knew it. The working of that failing, and his iron efforts to control it, made up the whole character of the man.

The gross corruption which characterised a late period of Irish history was then comparatively unknown. It is very possible that had it been attempted, its success had been very inferior to that it was destined to obtain subsequently, for the whole tone of

public feeling was higher and purer. Public men were both more independent in property, as well as principle, and no distinction of talent or capacity could have dispensed with the greater gifts of honesty and good faith. If there were not venality and low ambition, however, to work upon, there were other national traits no less open to the seductive arts of a crafty administration. There was a warm-hearted and generous confidence, and a gratitude that actually accepted a pledge, and acknowledged it for performance. These were weaknesses, not likely to escape the shrewd perception of party, and, to the utmost, were they profited by. The great game of the Government was to sow, if not dissension, at least distrust, in the ranks of the national party — to chill the ardour of patriotism, and, wherever possible, to excite different views, and different roads to success, amongst the popular leaders of the time. There came a day, when corruption only asked to see a man's rent-roll, and the list of his mortgages, when his price could be estimated as easily as an actuary can calculate an annuity, when given the age and the circumstances of the individual. Then, however, the investigation demanded nicer and more delicate treatment, for the question was, the more subtle one of the mixed and often discordant motives of the human heart!

The Duke of Portland was well calculated to carry out a policy of this kind, but I am far from suspecting that he was himself fully aware of the drama in which he acted. He was a plain, straightforward man, of average good sense, but more than average firmness and determination. He came over to Ireland thoroughly impressed with the favourite English maxim, that

whatever Irishmen wish is assuredly bad for them, and thought, like the old physicians of the sixteenth century, that a patient's benefit was in the exact proportion to his repugnance for the remedy. I am not quite sure that this pleasant theory is not even yet the favourite one, as regards Ireland, which, perhaps, after all, might be permitted the privilege so generally accorded to the incurable, to take a little medicine of her own prescribing. Be this as it may, I am convinced that the Duke of Portland was no hypocrite, but firmly believed in the efficacy of the system he advocated, and only made use of the blandishments and hospitalities of his station to facilitate connections which he trusted would at last be concurred in, on the unerring grounds of reason and judgment. Whatever people may say or think to the contrary, hypocrisy — that is, a really well-sustained and long-maintained hypocrisy — is one of the rarest things to be met with, and might even be suspected never to exist at all, since that the qualities and gifts necessary, or indeed indispensable, to its attainment are exactly of an order which bespeaks some of the first and greatest traits of human nature, and for that reason would make the game of dissimulation impossible; and I would be as slow to believe that a man could search the heart, study the passions, weigh the motives, and balance the impulses of his fellow-men, for mere purposes of trick or deception, as that a doctor would devote years of toil and labour in his art for the sole aim of poisoning and destroying his patients.

Few men out of the lists of party took so great an interest in the great struggle as Tony Fagan. With the success of the patriotic side his own ambitions

were intimately involved. It was not the section of great wealth, and there was no saying to what eminence a man of his affluence might attain amongst them. He not only kept a registry of all the members, with their peculiar leanings and party connections annexed to it, but he carefully noted down any circumstance likely to influence the vote or sway the motives of the principal leaders of the people. His sources of information were considerable, and penetrated every class of society, from the high world of Dublin, down to the lowest resorts of the rabble. The needy gentleman, hard pressed for resources, found his dealings with the Grinder wonderfully facilitated by any little communication of back-stairs doings at the Castle, or the secrets of the Chief Secretary's office; while the humble ballad-singer of the streets, or the ragged newsman, were equally certain of a "tester," could they only supply some passing incident that bore upon the relations of party.

If not one of the most brilliant, certainly one of the most assiduous, of Fagan's emissaries, was a certain Samuel Cotterell — a man who held the high and responsible dignity of state trumpeter in the Irish Court. He was a large, fine-looking, though somewhat overcorpulent, personage, with a most imposing dignity of air, and a calm self-possession of manner, that well became his functions. Perhaps this was natural to him; but some of it may well be attributed to his sense of the dignity of one who only appeared in public on the very greatest occasions, and was himself the herald of a splendid ceremonial.

From long association with the Viceregal Court, he had grown to believe himself a part, and by no means

an insignificant part, of the Government; and spoke of himself as of one mysteriously but intimately mixed up in all the acts of the State. The pretentious absurdity, the overweening vanity, of the man, which afforded so much amusement to others, gave no pleasure to Fagan — they rather vexed and irritated him; but these were feelings that he cautiously concealed, for he well knew the touchy and irritable nature of the man, and that whatever little information could be derived from him was only come-at-able by indulging his vein of self-esteem.

It had been for years his custom to pay a visit to Fagan on the eve of any great solemnity, and he was snugly installed in the little bow-window on the evening of the 26th May, with a goodly array of glasses, and a very formidable square decanter of whiskey on a table in front of him. Fagan, who never could trust to the indiscreet propensity of Polly to "quiz" his distinguished friend, had sent her to spend the day in the country with some acquaintances; Raper was deep in a difficult passage of Richter, in his own chamber; so that the Grinder was free to communicate with the great official, unmolested and undisturbed.

Most men carry into private life some little trait or habit of their professional career. The lawyer is apt to be pert, interrogative, and dictatorial; the doctor generally distills the tiresomeness of the patient in his own conversation; the soldier is proverbially pipe-clay; and so, perhaps, we may forgive our friend Cotterell, if his voice, in speaking, seemed to emulate the proud notes of his favourite instrument; while his utterance came in short, broken, abrupt bursts — faint, but faithful imitations of his brazen performances in public.

He was naturally not given to talking, so that it is more than probable the habit of "staccato" was, in itself, a great relief to him.

I will not pretend to say that Fagan's patience was not sorely tried, as well by the matter as the manner of his friend. His pursuit of politics was, indeed, under the greatest of difficulties; but he laboured on, and, like some patient gold-seeker, was satisfied to wash the sand for hours, rewarded with even a few grains of the precious metal at the end of his toil.

"Help yourself, Sam. That's the poteen — this here is Kinahan," said the Grinder, who well knew that until the finish of the third tumbler, Mr. Cotterell's oracle gave no sound. "Help yourself, and remember you'll have a fatiguing day to-morrow!"

"A great day — say rather a great day for Ireland," tolled out the trumpeter.

"That's to be seen," replied Fagan, caustically. "I have witnessed a good many of those great days for Ireland, but I'd be sorely puzzled to say what has come of them."

"There are three great days for Ireland every year. There's the opening, one; the King's, two; St. Patrick's, three—"

"I know all that," muttered Tony, discontentedly.

"St. Patrick's, three; and a collar day!" repeated Sam, solemnly.

"Collars, and curs to wear them," growled out Tony under his breath.

"Ay, a collar day!" and he raised his eyes with a half devotional expression at these imposing words.

"The Duke will open Parliament in person?"

asked Fagan, as a kind of suggestive hint, which chanced to turn the talk.

"So we mean, sir — we have always done so. Procession to form in the Upper Castle Yard at twelve — battle-axes in full dress — Ulster in his tabard!"

"Yes — yes; I have seen it over and over again," sighed Fagan, wearily.

"Sounds of trumpet in the court — flourish!"

"Flourish, indeed!" sighed Tony; "it's the only thing does flourish in poor Ireland. Tell me, Sam, has the Court been brilliant lately?"

"We gave two dinners last week — plain dress — bags and swords!"

"And who were the company?"

"Loftus, Lodge, and Morris, Skeffington, Langrishe, and others — Boyle Roche, the Usher-in-waiting. On Friday, we had Rowley, Charlemont—"

"Lord Charlemont! did he dine with the Viceroy on Friday last?"

"Yes, sir; and it was the first time we have asked him since the Mutiny Bill!"

"This is, indeed, strange, Sam; I scarcely thought he was on such terms with the Court!"

"We forgive and forget, sir — we forgive and forget," said Sam, waving his hand with dignity.

"There was young Carew, also."

"Walter Carew, the member for Wicklow?"

"The same — took in Lady Charlotte Carteret — sat next to her Grace, and spoken to frequently — French wife — much noticed!"

"Is he one of the new converts, then?" asked Fagan, slowly; "is he about to change the colour of his coat?"

"A deep claret with diamond buttons, jabot and ruffles, Mechlin lace—"

"And the Duke, you say, spoke much with him?"

"Repeatedly."

"They talked of politics?"

"We talked of everything."

"And in terms of agreement, too?"

"Not about artichokes. Carew likes them in oil, we always prefer butter."

"That is a most important difference of opinion," said Tony, with a sneer.

"We thought nothing of it," said the other, with an air of dignity; "for shortly after, we accepted an invitation to go down to Castle Carew for a week."

"To spend a week at Castle Carew?"

"A half state visit."

"With all the tag-rag and bob-tail of a Court — the lazy drones of pageantry — the men of painted coats and patched characters; the women painted too, but beyond the art of patching for a reputation."

"No; in half state," replied Cotterell, calmly, and not either heeding or attending to this passionate outburst; "two aides-de-camp; Mr. Barrold, private secretary; Sir George Gore, and about thirty servants."

"Thirty thieves in state livery — thirty bandits in silk stockings and powder!"

"We have made mutual concessions, and shall, I doubt not, be good friends," continued Sam, only thinking of what he said himself. "Carew is to give our state policy a fair trial, and we are to taste the artichokes with oil. His Grace proposed the contract, and then proposed the visit."

A deep groan of angry indignation was all that

Tony could utter in reply. "And this same visit," said he, at last, "when is it to take place?"

"Next week; for the present we have much on our hands. We open Parliament to-morrow; Wednesday, grand dinner to peers and peeresses; Thursday, the judges and law officers; Friday, debate on the address — small party of friends; Saturday we go to the play in state — we like the play."

"You do — do you?" said the Grinder, with a grin of malice, as some vindictive feeling worked within him.

"We have commanded 'The Road to Ruin,'" continued Cotterell.

"Out of compliment to your politics, I suppose?"

"Holman's Young Rapid always amused us!"

"Carew's performance of the character is better still — it is real; it is palpable." Then, suddenly carried beyond himself by a burst of passion, he cried — "Now, is it possible that your heavy-browed Duke fancies a country can be ruled in this wise? Does he believe that a little flattery here, a little bribery there, some calumny to separate friends, some gossip to sow dissension amongst intimates, a promise of place, a title or a pension thrown to the hungry hounds that yelp, and bark, and fawn about a Court — that this means government, or that these men are the nation?"

"You have overturned the sugar-bowl," observed Cotterell.

"Better than to upset the country," said the other, with a contemptuous look at his stolid companion. "I tell you what it is, Cotterell," added he, gravely; "these English had might and power on their side, and had they rested their strength on them they might defy

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us, for we are the weaker party; but they have condescended to try other weapons, and would encounter us with subtlety, intrigue, and cabal. Now, mark my words — we may not live to see it — but the time will come when their scheme will recoil upon themselves; for we are their equals —ay, more than their equals with such arms as these! Fools that they are, not to see that if they destroy the influence of the higher classes, the people will elect leaders from their own ranks; and, instead of having to fight Popery alone, the day is not distant when they'll have to combat democracy too! Will not the tune be changed then?"

"It must always be 'God save the King,' sir, on birth-days," said Cotterell; who was satisfied if he either caught or comprehended the last words of any discourse.

It is difficult to say whether the Grinder's temper could have much longer endured these assaults of stupidity, but for the sudden appearance of Raper, who, coming stealthily forward, whispered a few words in Fagan's ear.

"Did you say here? — here?" asked Fagan, eagerly.

"Yes, sir," replied Raper; "below in the office."

"But why there? Why not show him up stairs? No, no, you're right," added he, with a most explanatory glance towards his guest. "I must leave you for a few minutes, Cotterell. Take care of yourself till I come back;" and with this apology he arose, and followed Raper down stairs.

The visitor, who sat on one of the high office-stools, dressed in the first fashion of the day, slapped his boot impatiently with his cane, and did not even

remove his hat as Fagan entered, contenting himself with a slight touch of the finger to its leaf for salutation.

"Sorry to disturb you, Fagan," said he, half cavalierly, "but being in town late this evening, and knowing the value of even five minutes' personal intercourse, I have dropped in to say — what I have so often said in the same place — I want money."

"Grieved to hear it, Mr. Carew," was the grave, sententious reply.

"I don't believe you, Tony. When a man can lend, as you can, on his own terms, he's never very sorry to hear of the occasion for his services."

"Cash is scarce, sir."

"So I have always found it, Tony; but, like everything else, one gets it by paying for. I'm willing to do so, and now, what's the rate; ten, fifteen, or are you Patriarch enough to need twenty per cent.?"

"I'm not sure that I could oblige you, even on such terms, Mr. Carew. There is a long, outstanding, unsettled account between us. There is a very considerable balance due to me; there are, in fact, dealings between us, which call for a speedy arrangement."

"And which are very unlikely to be favoured with it, Tony. Now, I havn't a great deal of time to throw away, for I'm off to the country to-night, so that, pray, let us understand each other at once. I shall need, before Monday next, a sum of not less than eight thousand pounds. Hacket, my man-of-law, will show you such securities as I possess. Call on him, and take your choice of them. I desire that our negotiation should be strictly a matter between ourselves, because we live in gossiping times, and I don't care to

amuse the town with my private affairs. Are you satisfied with this?"

"Eight thousand, in bills, of course, sir?"

"If you wish it!"

"At what dates?"

"The longer the better."

"Shall we say in two sums of four thousand each; six months, and nine?"

"With all my heart. When can I touch the coin?"

"Now, sir — this moment if you desire it."

"Write the check then, Tony," said he, hurriedly.

"There, sir, there are the bills for your signature," said Fagan. "Will you have the goodness to give me a line to Hacket about the securities?"

"Of course," said he; and he at once wrote the note required. "Now for another point, Tony; I am going to ask a favour of you. Are you in a gracious mood this evening?"

The appeal was sudden enough to be disconcerting, and so Fagan felt it, for he looked embarrassed and confused in no ordinary degree.

"Come, I see I shall not be refused," said my father, who at once saw that the only course was the bold one. "It is this: we are expecting some friends to spend a few days with us at Castle Carew, a kind of house-warming to that new wing; we have done our best to gather around us whatever our good city boasts of agreeability and beauty, and with tolerable success. There is, I may say, but one wanting to make our triumph complete. With her presence, I'd wager a thousand guineas that no country mansion in Great Britain could contest the palm with us."

Fagan grew deadly pale, as he listened, then

flushed deeply, and a second time a sickly hue crept over his features, as, in a voice barely above a whisper, he said —

"You mean my daughter, sir?"

"Of course I do, Tony. A man needn't read riddles to know who is the handsomest girl in Dublin. I hope you'll not deny us the favour of her company. My wife will meet her at Bray; she'll come into town, if you prefer it, and take her up here."

"Oh, no, sir — not here," said Fagan, hurriedly, who, whatever plans he might be forming in his mind, quickly saw the inconvenience of such a step.

"It shall be as you please in every respect, Fagan. Now, on Tuesday morning —"

"Not so fast, sir — not so fast," said Fagan, calmly. "You havn't given me time for much reflection now; and the very little thought I have bestowed on the matter suggests grave doubts to me. Nobody knows better than Mr. Carew that a wide gulf separates our walk in life from his — that however contented with our lot in this world, it is a very humble one —"

"Egad, I like such humility. The man who can draw a check for ten thousand at sight, and yet never detect any remarkable alteration in his banker's book, ought to be proud of the philosophy that teaches him contentment. Tony, my worthy friend, don't try to mystify me. You know, and you'd be a fool if you didn't know, that with your wealth and your daughter's beauty you have only to choose the station she will occupy. There is but one way you can possibly defeat her success, and that is by estranging her from the world, and withdrawing her from all intercourse with society. I can't believe that this is your inten-

tion — I can scarcely credit that it could be her wish. Let us, then, have the honour of introducing her to that rank, the very highest position in which she would grace and dignify. I ask it as a favour — the very greatest you can bestow on us."

"No, sir; it cannot be. It's impossible, utterly impossible."

"I am really curious to know upon what grounds, for I confess they are a secret to me!"

"So they must remain, then, sir, if you cannot persuade me to open more of my heart than I am in the habit of doing with comparative strangers. I can be very grateful for the honour you intend me, Mr. Carew, but the best way to be so is, probably, not to accompany that feeling with any sense of personal humiliation!"

"You are certainly not bent on giving me any clue to your motives, Fagan."

"I'm sorry for it, sir; but frankness to you might be great unfairness to myself."

"More riddles, Tony, and I'm far too dull to read them."

"Well, then, sir, perhaps you'd understand me when I say, that Anthony Fagan, low and humble as he is, has no mind to expose his daughter to the sneers and scoffs of a rank she has no pretension to mix with; that miser as he is, he wouldn't bring a blush of shame to her cheek for all the wealth of India! and that, rather than sit at home here and brood over every insult that would be offered to the usurer's daughter by those beggarly spendthrifts, that are at liberty by his bounty, he'd earn his name of the Grinder by crushing them to the dust!"

The vehemence of his utterance had gone on increasing as he spoke, till at the end the last words were given with almost a scream of passion.

"I must say, Fagan," replied my father, calmly, "that you form a very humble, I trust a very unfair, estimate of the habits of my house, not to say of my own feelings. However, we'll not dispute the matter; good evening to you."

"Good evening, sir; I'm sorry I was so warm; I hope I have said nothing that could offend you."

"Not when you didn't mean offence, believe me, Fagan. I repeat my hope, that the friends and acquaintances with whom I live are not the underbred and ill-mannered class you think them; beyond that I have nothing to say — good evening."

Probably no amount of discussion and argument on the subject could so palpably have convinced Fagan of the vast superiority of a man of good manners over one of inferior breeding, as did the calm and gentleman-like quietude of my father's bearing, in contradistinction to his own passionate outbreak.

"One moment, sir — one moment," cried he, laying his hand on my father's arm; "you really believe that one humbly born as Polly, the daughter of a man in my condition, would be received amongst the high and titled of Dublin without a scornful allusion to whence she came — without a sneer at her rank in life?"

"If I thought anything else, Fagan, I should be dishonoured in making this request of you."

"She shall go, sir — she shall go," cried Fagan.

"Thanks for the confidence, Fagan; I know you'd

rather trust me with half your fortune without a scratch of my pen in return."

Fagan turned away his head, but a motion of his hand across his eyes showed how he felt the speech.

To obviate the awkwardness of the moment, my father entered upon the details of the journey, for which it was arranged that Fagan was to send his daughter to Bray, where a carriage from Castle Carew would be in waiting to convey her the remainder of the way. These points being settled, my father once again thanked him for his compliance, and departed.

I should be only mystifying my reader most unjustifiably should I affect any secresy as to my father's reasons for this singular invitation; for although the gossipry of the day could adduce innumerable plots and plans which were to spring out of it, I sincerely believe his sole motive was the pleasure that he and my mother were sure to feel in doing a piece of graceful and generous politeness. MacNaghten's account of Polly had strongly excited their curiosity, not to speak of a more worthy feeling, in her behalf, and knowing that Fagan's immense wealth would one day or other be hers, they felt it was but fair that she should see, and be seen, by that world of which she was yet to be a distinguished ornament. Beyond this, I implicitly believe, they had no motive nor plan. Of course, I do not pretend to say, that even amongst his own very guests, the men who travelled down to enjoy his hospitality, his conduct did not come in for its share of criticism. Many an artful device was attributed to this seeming stroke of policy, not one of which, however, did not more redound to my father's craft than to his character for honourable dealing. But what

would become of "bad tongues" in this world if there were not generous natures to calumniate and vilify! Of a verity, scandal prefers a high mark and an unblemished reputation for its assaults, far better than a damaged fame and a tattered character; it seems more heroic to shy a pebble through a pane of plate-glass than to pitch a stone through a cracked casement!

CHAPTER IX.

A Gentleman Usher.

Among the members of the Viceregal suite who were to accompany his Grace on a visit, was a certain Barry Rutledge, a gentleman-usher, whose character and doings were well known in the times I speak of. When a very young man, Rutledge had been stripped of his entire patrimony on the turf, and was thrown for support upon the kindness of those who had known him in better days. Whether it was that time had developed or adversity had sharpened his wits, it is certain that he showed himself to be a far shrewder and more intelligent being than the world had heretofore deemed him. If he was not gifted with any very great insight into politics, for which he was free to own he had no taste, he was well versed in human nature, at least in all its least favourable aspects, and thorougly understood how to detect and profit by the weaknesses of those with whom he came in contact.

His racing experiences had given him all the training and teaching which he possessed, and to his own fancied analogy between the turf and the great race

of life, did he owe all the shrewd inspirations that guided him.

His favourite theory was, that however well a horse may gallop, there is always, if one but knew it, some kind of ground that would throw him "out of stride;" and so of men: he calculated that every one is accompanied by some circumstance or other, which forms his stumbling-block through life; and however it may escape notice, that to its existence will be referrible innumerable turnings and windings, whose seeming contradictions excite surprise and astonishment.

To learn all these secret defects, to store his mind with every incident of family and fortune of the chief actors of the time, was the mechanism by which he worked, and certainly in such inquisitorial pursuits it would have been hard to find his equal. By keenly watching the lines of action men pursued, he had taught himself to trace back to their motives, and by the exercise of these faculties he had at last attained to a skill in reading character that seemed little short of marvellous.

Nature had been most favourable in fitting him for his career, for his features were of that cast which bespeaks a soft, easy temperament, careless and unsuspecting. His large blue eyes and curly golden hair gave him, even at thirty, a boyish look, and both in voice and manner was he singularly youthful, while his laugh was like the joyous outburst of a happy schoolboy.

None could have ever suspected that such a figure as this, arrayed in the trappings of a courtly usher, could have inclosed within it a whole net-work of secret intrigue and plot. My mother had the misfortune

to make a still more fatal blunder; for seeing him, in what she pardonably enough believed to be a livery, she took him to be a menial, and actually despatched him to her carriage to fetch her fan! The incident got abroad, and Rutledge, of course, was well laughed at; but he seemed to enjoy the mirth so thoroughly, and told the story so well himself, that it could never be imagined he felt the slightest annoyance on the subject. By all accounts, however, the great weakness of his character was the belief that he was decidedly noble-looking and high-bred; that place him were you would, costume him how you might, surround him with all that might disparage pretension, yet that such was the innate gentlemanhood of his nature — the least critical of observers would not fail to acknowledge him. To say that he concealed this weakness most completely — that he shrouded it in the very depth of his heart, is only to repeat what I have already mentioned as to his character, for he was watchful over every trifle that should betray a knowledge of his nature, and sensitively alive to the terrors of ridicule. From that hour forward he became my mother's enemy — not, as many others might, by decrying her pretensions to beauty, or by any depreciatory remarks on her dress or manner, but in a far deeper sense, and with more malignant determination.

To learn who she was — of what family — what were her connections — their rank, name, and station, were his first objects; and although the difficulties of the inquiry were considerable, his sources of knowledge were sufficient to overcome them. He got to hear something at least of her history, and to trace back her mysterious journey to an ancient chateau belonging

to the Crown of France. Beyond this, in all likelihood, he could not go; but even here were materials enough for his subtlety to make use of.

The Viceregal visit to Castle Carew had been all planned by him. He had persuaded the Duke that the time was come when, by a little timely flattering, the whole landed gentry of Ireland were in his hands. The conciliating tone of the speech which opened Parliament — the affectedly generous confidence of England in all the acts of the Irish Legislature, had already succeeded to a miracle. Grattan himself moved the address in terms of unbounded reliance on the good faith of Government. Flood followed in the same strain, and others, of lesser note, were ashamed to utter a sentiment of distrust, in the presence of such splendid instances of confiding generosity. My father, although not a leading orator of the House, was, from connection and fortune, possessed of much influence, and well worth the trouble of gaining over, and, as Rutledge said, "It was pleasant to have to deal with a man who wanted neither place, money, nor the peerage, but whose alliance could be ratified at his own table, and pledged in his own Burgundy."

Every one knows what happens in the East when a great sovereign makes a present of an elephant to some inferior chief. The morale of a Viceregal visit is pretty much in the same category. It is an honour that cannot be declined, and it is generally sure to ruin the entertainer. Of course I do not talk of the present times, nor of late years. Lord Lieutenants have grown to be less stately; the hosts have become less splendid. But in the days I speak of here, there were great names and great fortunes in the land. The

influence of the country neither flowed from Roman rescripts nor priestly denunciations. The Lions of Judah, and the Doves of Elphin, were as yet unknown to our political zoology; and, with all their faults and short-comings, we had at least a national gentry party — high-spirited, hospitable, and generous, and whose misfortunes were probably owing to the fact that they gave a too implicit faith to the adaptiveness of English laws to a people who have not, in their habits, natures or feelings, the slightest analogy to Englishmen; and that, when at length they began to perceive the error, it was already too late to repair it.

The Viceroy's arrival at Castle Carew was fixed for a Tuesday, and on Monday evening Mr. Barry Rutledge drove up to the door just as my father and mother, with Dan MacNaghten, were issuing forth for a walk. He had brought with him a list of those for whom accommodation should be provided, and the number considerably exceeded all expectation. Nor was this the only disconcerting event, for my father now learned, for the first time, that he should have taken his Grace's pleasure with regard to each of the other guests he had invited to meet him — a piece of etiquette he had never so much as thought of. "Of course, it's not much matter," said Rutledge, laughing easily; "your acquaintances are all known to his Grace."

"I'm not so sure of that," interposed my father, quickly; for he suddenly remembered that Polly Fagan was not likely to have been presented at Court, nor was she one to expect to escape notice.

"He never thinks of politics in private life; he has

not the smallest objection to meet every shade of politician."

"I'm quite sure of that," said my father, musing, but by no means satisfied with the prospect before him.

"Tell Rutledge whom you expect," broke in Dan, "and he'll be able to guide you should there be any difficulty about them."

"Ma foi!" broke in my mother, half impatiently, in her imperfect language. "If dey are of la bonne société, what will you have more?"

"Of course," assented Rutledge. "The names we are all familiar with — the good houses of the country." Carelessly as he spoke, he contrived to dart a quick glance towards my mother, but to his astonishment she showed no sign of discomfort or uneasiness.

"Egad, I think it somewhat hard that a man's company should not be of his own choosing!" said MacNaghten, half angrily. "Do you think his Grace would order the dinner away if there happened to be a dish at table he didn't like?"

"Not exactly, if he were not compelled to eat of it," said Rutledge, good-humouredly; "but I'm sure all this time, that we're only amusing ourselves fighting shadows. Just tell me who are coming, and I'll be able to give you a hint if any of them should be personally displeasing to his Grace."

"You remember them all, Dan," said my father: "try and repeat the names."

"Shall we keep the lump of sugar for the last," said Dan, "as they do with children when they give them medicine? or shall we begin with your own friends, Rutledge? for we've got Archdall, and Billy

Burton, and Freke, and Barty Hoare, and some others of the same stamp — fellows that I call very bad company, but that I'm well aware you Castle folk expect to see everywhere you go!"

"But you've done things admirably," cried Rutledge. "These are exactly the men for us. Have you Townsend?"

"Ay, and his flapper, Tisdall; for without Joe he never remembers what story to tell next. And then there's Jack Preston! Egad you'll fancy yourselves on on the Treasury benches."

"Well, now for the Opposition," said Rutledge, gaily.

"To begin: Grattan can't come — a sick child, the measles, or something or other wrong in the nursery, which he thinks of more consequence than 'all your houses;' Ponsonby won't come — he votes you all very dull company; Hugh O'Donnell is of the same mind, and adds, that he'd rather see Tom Thumb, in Fishamble Street, than all your court tom fooleries twice over. But then we've old Bob Ffrench — Bitter Bob; Joe Curtis —"

"Not the same Curtis that refused his Grace leave to shoot over his bog at Ballyvane?"

"The very man, and just as likely to send another refusal if the request be repeated."

"I didn't know of this, Dan," interposed my father. "This is really awkward."

"Perhaps it was a little untoward," replied MacNaghten, "but there was no help for it. Joe asked himself, and when I wrote to say that the Duke was coming, he replied that he'd certainly not fail to be here, for he didn't think there was another house in

the kingdom likely to harbour them both at the same time."

"He was right there," said Rutledge, gravely.

"He generally is right," replied MacNaghten, with a dry nod. "Stephen Blake, too, isn't unlikely to come over, particularly if he finds out that we've little room to spare, and that he'll put us all to inconvenience."

"Oh, we'll have room enough for every one," cried my father.

"I do hope, at least, none will go away for want of — how you say, place?" said my mother.

"That's exactly the right word for it," cried MacNaghten, slily. "'Tis looking for places the half of them are. I've said nothing of the ladies, Rutledge; for of course your courtly habits see no party distinctions amongst the fair sex. We'll astonish your English notions, I fancy, with such a display of Irish beauty as you've no idea of."

"That we can appreciate without the slightest disparagement on the score of politics."

"Need you tell him of Polly?" whispered my father in Dan's ear.

"No; it's just as well not."

"I'd tell him, Dan; the thing is done and cannot be undone," continued he, in the same undertone.

"As you please."

"We mean to show you such a girl, Rutledge, as probably not St. James's itself could match. When I tell you she'll have not very far from half a million sterling, I think it's not too much to say that your English Court hasn't such a prize in the wheel."

"It's Westrop's daughter you mean?"

"Not a bit of it, man. Dorothy won't have fifty thousand. I doubt, greatly, if she'll have thirty; and as to look, style, and figure, she's not to compare with the girl I mean."

"The Lady Lucy Lighton? and she is very beautiful, I confess."

"Lucy Lighton! Why, what are you thinking of? Where would she get the fortune I'm speaking of? But you'd never guess the name; you never saw her — perhaps never so much as heard of her. She is a Miss Fagan."

"Polly — Polly Fagan, the Grinder's daughter?"

"So, then, you have heard of her?" said Dan, not a little disconcerted by this burst of intelligence.

"Heard of her! Nay, more, I've seen and spoken with her. I once made a descent on the old father, in the hope of doing something with him, and being, accidentally I believe it was, shown up stairs, I made Miss Polly's acquaintance, but with just as little profit."

"You'll have more time to improve the intimacy here, Rutledge," said my father, laughingly, "if MacNaghten be not a rival 'near the throne.'"

"I'll not interfere with you, Barry," cried MacNaghten, carelessly.

Rutledge gave one of his usual unmeaning laughs, and said, "After all, if we except Ffrench and Curtis, there's nothing to be afraid of; and I suppose there will be no difficulty in keeping them at a safe distance."

"Bob Ffrench cares much more for Carew's Burgundy than for his grand acquaintances," interposed MacNaghten; "and as for Curtis, he only comes out of

curiosity. Once satisfied that all will go on in the routine fashion of every other country visit, he'll jog home again, sorely discontented with himself for the trouble he has taken to come here."

"I need scarcely tell you," said Rutledge, taking my father's arm, and leading him to one side, "I need scarcely tell you, that we'd better avoid all discussion about politics and party. You yourself are very unlikely to commit any error in tact; but of course you cannot answer for others. Would it not, then, be as well to give some kind of hint?"

"Faith," broke in my father hastily, "I will never attempt to curb the liberty of speech of any one who does me the honour to be my guest; and I am sure I have not a friend in the world who would tamely submit to such dictation."

"Perhaps you are right. Indeed, I'm sure you are," broke in Rutledge, and hastened his step till he joined the others.

CHAPTER X.

The Company at Castle Carew.

From an early hour on the following morning, the company began to pour in to Castle Carew, their style and retinue being as varied as may well be imagined. Some arriving in all the pomp and splendour of handsomely-appointed equipage. Some dashing up with splashed and panting posters, and others jogging lazily along the avenue in some old "conveniency" of a past age, drawn by animals far more habituated to the plough than the phaeton. Amongst those first was conspicuous the singular old noddy, as it was called,

in which Ffrench and Curtis travelled; the driver being perilously elevated some dozen feet above the earth, and perched on a bar which it required almost a rope-dancer's dexterity to occupy. This primitive conveyance, as it trundled along before the windows, drew many to gaze and jest upon its curious appearance — a degree of notice which seemed to have very opposite effects on the two individuals exposed to it; for while Ffrench nodded, kissed hands, and smiled good-humouredly to his friends, Curtis sat back with his arms folded, and his hat slouched over his eyes, as if endeavouring to escape recognition.

"Confound the rascal!" muttered he between his teeth, "couldn't he have managed to creep round by some back way; his blasted jingling old rat-trap has called the whole household to look at us! — and may I never, if he hasn't broken something! What's the matter — what are you getting down for?"

"'Tis the mare's got the reins under her tail, yer honer!" said the driver, as he descended some half-dozen feet, to enable him to get near enough to rectify the entanglement. The process was made more difficult by the complicated machinery of springs, straps, bars, and bolts which supported the box, and in the midst of which the poor fellow sat as in a cage. He was, however, proceeding in a very business-like way, to tug at the tail with one hand, and pull out the reins with the other, when, suddenly, far behind, there came the tearing tramp of horses advancing at speed, the cracking of the postilions' whips adding to the clamour. The horses of the noddy feeling no restraint from the reins, and terrified by the uproar, kicked up their heels at once, and bolted away, shooting the driver

out of his den into a flower-plot. Away dashed the affrighted beasts, the crazy old conveyance rattling and shaking behind them with a deafening uproar. Immediately beyond the hall-door, the avenue took a sweep round a copse, and by a gentle descent wound its course towards the stables, a considerable expanse of ornamental water bordering the road on the other side. Down the slope they now rushed madly; and, unable from their speed to accomplish the turn in safety, they made a sudden "jib" at the water's edge, which upset the noddy, pitching its two occupants over head and heels into the lake. By good fortune it was not more than four or five feet deep in this part, so that they came off with no other injury than a thorough drenching, and the ridicule which met them in the laughter of some fifty spectators. As for Ffrench, he had to sit down on the bank and laugh till the very tears came — the efforts of Curtis to rid himself of tangled dead weed and straggling aquatic plants having driven that choleric subject almost out of his wits.

"This may be an excellent joke; I've no doubt it is, since you seem to think so; but, by Heaven, sir, I'll try if I cannot make some one responsible for it! Yes, gentlemen," added he, shaking his fist at the crowded windows, "it's not all over yet; we'll see who laughs last!"

"Faith, we're well off, to escape with a little fright, and some frog-spawn," said Bob; "it might have been worse!"

"It shall be worse, sir, far worse, depend upon it!" said the other.

By this time my father had come up to the spot, and endeavoured, as well as the absurdity of the scene

would permit him, to condole with the angry sufferer. It was not, however, without the greatest difficulty that Curtis could be prevailed upon to enter the house. The very idea of being a laughing-stock was madness to him; and it was only on the strict assurance, that no allusion to the event would be tolerated by my father, that he at last gave in and accompanied him.

Insignificant as was this incident in itself, it was the origin of very grave consequences. Curtis was one of those men who are unforgiving to anything like ridicule; and the sense of injury added to the poignant suffering of a ruined estate, and a fallen condition, by no means improved a temper irascible beyond everything. He entered the house, swearing every species of vengeance on the innocent cause of his misadventure.

"Time was, sir, when a Lord-Lieutenant drove to a gentleman's door in a style becoming his dignity, and not heralded by half-a-dozen rascals, whip-cracking and caracolling like the clowns in a circus!"

Such was his angry commentary, as he pushed past my father, and hastened to his room. Long after he sat brooding and mourning over his calamity. It was forgotten in the drawing-room, where Polly had now arrived, dividing attention and interest with the Viceroy himself. Indeed, while his Grace was surrounded with courtly and grave figures, discussing the news of the day and the passing topics, Polly was the centre of a far more animated group, whose laughter and raillery rung through the apartment.

My mother was charmed with her, not only because she possessed considerable personal charms, but being of her own age, and speaking French with ease and fluency, it was a great happiness to her to unbend once

again in all the freedom of her own delightful language. It was to no purpose that my father whispered to her the names and titles of various guests to whom peculiar honour was due; it was in vain that he led her to the seat beside some tiresome old lady, all dullness and diamonds; by some magical attraction she would find herself leaning over Polly's chair, and listening to her, as she talked, in admiring ecstasy. It was unquestionably true, that although most of the company were selected less for personal qualities than their political influence, there were many most agreeable persons in the number. My mother, however, was already fascinated, and she required more self-restraint than she usually imposed upon herself, to forego a pleasure which she saw no reason for relinquishing.

My father exerted himself to the uttermost. Few men, I believe, performed the host more gracefully; but nothing more fatally mars the ease and destroys the charm of that character than anything like over-effort at success. His attentions were too marked and too hurried; he had exaggerated to himself the difficulties of his situation, and he increased them tenfold by his own terrors.

The Duke was one of those plain, quiet, well-bred persons so frequently met with in the upper classes of England, and whose strongest characteristic is, probably, the excessive simplicity of their manners, and the total absence of everything bordering on pretension. This very quietude, however, is frequently misinterpreted, and, in Ireland especially, often taken for the very excess of pride and haughtiness. Such did it seem on the present occasion; for now that the restraint of a great position was removed, and that he suffered himself to

unbend from the cumbrous requirements of a state existence, the ease of his deportment was suspected to be indifference, and the absence of all effort was deemed a contemptuous disregard for the company.

The moment, too, was not happily chosen to bring men of extreme and opposite opinions into contact. They met with coldness and distrust; they were even suspectful of the motives which had led to their meeting — in fact, a party whose elements were less suited to each other rarely assembled in an Irish country-house; and by ill-luck the weather took one of those wintry turns which are not unfrequent in our so-called summers, and set in to rain with that determined perseverance so common to a July in Ireland.

Nearly all the resources by which the company were to have been amused were of an out-door kind, and depended greatly on weather. The shooting, the driving, the pic-nicing, the visits to remarkable scenes in the neighbourhood, which Dan MacNaghten had "programmed" with such care and zeal, must now be abandoned, and supplied by occupation beneath the roof.

Oh, good reader, has it ever been your lot to have your house filled with a large and incongruous party, weather-bound and "bored?" To see them stealing stealthily about corridors, and peeping into rooms, as if fearful of chancing on something more tiresome than themselves? To watch their silent contemplation of the weather-glass, or their mournful gaze at the lowering and leaden sky? To hear the lazy, drowsy tone of the talk, broken by many a half-suppressed yawn? To know and to feel that they regard themselves as your prisoners, and you as their gaoler? — that your very

butler is in their eyes but an upper turnkey? Have you witnessed the utter failure of all efforts to amuse them? — have you overheard the criticism that pronounced your piano out of tune, your billiard-table out of level, your claret out of condition? Have you caught mysterious whisperings of conspiracies to get away? and heard the word "post-horses" uttered with an accent of joyful enthusiasm? Have you watched the growing antipathies of those that in your secret plannings you had destined to become sworn friends? Have you grieved over the disappointment which your peculiar favourites have been doomed to experience? Have you silently contemplated all the wrong combinations and unhappy conjunctures that have grown up, when you expected but unanimity and good feeling? Have you known all these things? and have you passed through the terrible ordeal of endeavouring to amuse the dissatisfied, to reconcile the incompatible, and to occupy the indolent? Without some such melancholy experience, you can scarcely imagine all that my poor father had to suffer.

Never was there such discontent as that household exhibited. The Viceregal party saw few of the non-adherents, and perceived that they made no converts amongst the enemy. The Liberals were annoyed at the restraint imposed on them by the presence of the Government people; the ladies were outraged at the distinguished notice conferred by their hostess on one who was not their equal in social position, and whom they saw for the first time admitted into the "set." In fact, instead of a large party, met together to please and be pleased, the society was broken up into small coteries and knots, all busily criticising and condemning

their neighbours, and only interrupting their censures by grievous complaints of the ill-fortune that had induced them to come there.

It was now the third morning of the Duke's visit, and the weather showed no symptoms of improvement. The dark sky was relieved towards the horizon by that line of treacherous light which to all accustomed to an Irish climate is the signal for continued rain. The most intrepid votary of out-door amusements had given up the cause in despair, and, as though dreading to augment the common burthen of dullness by meeting most of the guests, preferred keeping their rooms, and confining to themselves the gloom that oppressed them.

The small drawing-room that adjoined my mother's dressing-room was the only exception to this almost prison discipline, and there she now sat with Polly, MacNaghten, Rutledge, and one or two more, the privileged visitors of that favoured spot — my mother, at her embroidery frame, that pleasant, mock occupation which serves so admirably as an aid to talking or to listening, which every Frenchwoman knows so well how to employ as a conversational fly-wheel. They assuredly gave no evidence in their tone of that depression which the gloomy weather had thrown over the other guests. Laughter and merriment abounded; and a group more amusing and amused it would have been difficult to imagine. Rutledge, perhaps, turned his eyes towards the door occasionally, with the air of one in expectation of something or somebody; but none noticed this anxiety, nor, indeed, was he one to permit his thoughts to sway his outward actions.

"The poor Duke!" cried MacNaghten, "he can bear

it no longer. See, there he goes, in defiance of rain and wind, to take his walk in the shrubbery!"

"And mon pauvre Mari — go with him," said my mother, in a tone of lamentation that made all the hearers burst out a-laughing. "Ah, I know why you Irish are all so domestic," added she — "c'est le climat!"

"Will you allow us nothing to the credit of our fidelity — to our attachments, madame?" said Rutledge, who, while he continued to talk, never took his eyes off the two figures, who now walked side by side in the shrubbery.

"It is a capricious kind of thing, after all, is your Irish fidelity," said Polly. "Your love is generally but another form of self-esteem; you marry a woman because you can be proud of her beauty, her wit, her manners, and her accomplishments, and you are faithful because you never get tired in the indulgence of your own vanity."

"How kind of you is it, then, to let us never want for the occasion of indulging it," said Rutledge, half slily.

"I don't quite agree with you, Miss Polly," said MacNaghten, after a pause, in which he seemed to be reflecting over her words; "I think most men — Irishmen I mean — marry to please themselves. They may make mistakes of course; I don't pretend to say that they always choose well; but it is right to bear in mind that they are not free agents, and cannot have whom they please to wife."

"It is better with us," broke in my mother. "You marry one you have never seen before; you have nothing of how you call 'exaltation,' point des ideés

romantiques; you are delighted with all the little 'soins' and attentions of your husband, who has, at least, one inestimable merit — he is never familiar."

"How charming!" said Rutledge, with mock seriousness.

"Is it not?" continued she, not detecting the covert irony of his tone; "it is your intimité. — How you call it?"

"Intimacy."

"Oui," said she, smiling, but not trusting herself to repeat the word. "C'est cela — that destroys your happiness."

"Egad, I'd as soon be a bachelor," broke in MacNaghten, "if I only were to look at my wife with an opera-glass across the theatre, or be permitted to kiss her kid glove on her birth-day."

"What he say — why you laugh?" cried my mother, who could not follow the rapidity of his utterance.

"Mr. MacNaghten prefers homeliness to refinement," said Polly.

"Oui; you are right, my dear," added my mother; "it is more refined. And then, instead of all that 'tracasserie' you have about your house, and your servants, and the thousand little 'inconvenance de ménage,' you have one whom you consult on your toilette, your equipage, your 'coiffure;' in fact, in all affairs of good taste. Voilà Walter, par example, he never derange me for a moment — I hope I never ennuyé him."

"Quite right — perfectly right," said Polly, with a well-assumed gravity.

"By Jove that's only single harness work, after

all," said MacNaghten; "I'd rather risk a kick, now and then, and have another beside me to tug at this same burthen of daily life."

"I no understand you, you speak so fast. How droll you are, you Irish! See there, the Lord Duke and my husband, how they shake hands as if they did not meet before, and they walk together for the last half hour."

"A most cordial embrace, indeed," said Polly, fixing her eyes on Rutledge, who seemed far from being at ease under the inspection, while MacNaghten, giving one hasty glance through the window, snatched up his hat and left the room. He passed rapidly down the stairs, crossed the hall, and was just leaving the house when my father met him.

"The very man I wanted, Dan," cried he; "come to my room with me for a few minutes."

As they entered the room, my father turned the key in the door, and said, —

"We must not be interrupted, for I want to have a little talk with you. I have just parted with the Duke —"

"I know it," broke in Dan; "I saw you shake hands, and it was that made me hurry down stairs to meet you."

My father flushed up suddenly, and it was not till after a few seconds he was collected enough to continue.

"The fact is, Dan," said he, "this gathering of the clans has been a most unlucky business after all. There's no telling how it might have turned out, with favourable weather and good sport; but caged up together, the menagerie has done nothing but growl and

show their teeth; and, egad, very little was wanting to have set them all by the ears in open conflict."

MacNaghten shrugged his shoulders without speaking.

"It's an experiment I'll assuredly never try again," continued my father; "for whether it is that I have forgotten Irishmen, or that they are not what they used to be, but all has gone wrong."

"Your own fault, Watty. You were far too anxious about it going right; and whenever a man wants to usurp destiny, he invariably books himself for a 'break down.' You tried, besides, what no tact nor skill could manage. You wanted grand people to be grand, and witty people to be witty, and handsome people to look beautiful. Now, the very essence of a party like this is, to let everybody try and fancy themselves something that they are not, or, at least, that they are not usually. Your great folk ought to have been suffered to put off the greatness, and only be esteemed for their excessive agreeability. Your smart men ought not to have been called on for pleasantry, but only thought very high-bred and well-mannered, or, what is better still, well-born. And your beauties should have been permitted to astonish us all by a simplicity that despised paint, patches, and powder; and captivate us all, as a kind of domestic shepherdesses."

"It's too serious for jesting about, Dan; for I doubt if I have not offended some of the oldest friends I had in the world."

"I hope not," said MacNaghten, more seriously.

"I am sadly afraid it is so, though," said my father. "You know the Fosbrokes are gone?"

"Gone! When? I never heard of it!"

"They're gone. They left this about an hour ago. I must say it was very absurd of them. They ought to have made allowances for difference of country, habits, education; her very ignorance of the language should have been taken as an excuse. The Tisdalls I am less surprised at."

"Are they gone, too?"

"Yes! and without a leave-taking; except in so far as a very dry note, dated five o'clock in the morning, may be taken for such, telling of sudden intelligence just received — immediate necessity, and so forth. But after Harvey Hepton, I ought to be astonished at nothing."

"What of Harvey?" cried Dan, impatiently.

"Why he came into my room while I was dressing, and before I had time to ask the reason, he said, —

"'Watty, you and I have been friends since our school-days, and it would tell very badly for either, or both of us, if we quarrelled; and that no such ill-luck may befal us, I have come to say good bye.'

"'Good bye! but on what account?' exclaimed I.

"'Faith I'd rather you'd guess my reason than ask me for it, Watty. You well know how, in our bachelor days, I used to think this house half my own. I came and went as often without an invitation as with one; and as to supposing that I was not welcome, it would as soon have occurred to me to doubt of my identity. Now, however, we are both married. Matters are totally changed; nor does it follow, however we might wish it so, that our wives will like each other as well as you and I do.'

"'I see, Harvey,' said I, interrupting him, 'Mrs.

Hepton is offended at my wife's want of attention to her guests; but will not so amiable and clever a person as Mrs. Hepton make allowances for inexperience, a new country, a strange language, her very youth — she is not eighteen?'

"'I'm sure my wife took no ill-natured view of the case. I'm certain that if she alone were concerned, that is, I mean, if she herself were the only sufferer—'

"'So, then, it seems there is a copartnery in this misfortune,' broke I in, half angrily, for I was vexed to hear an old friend talk like some frumpy, antiquated dowager.

"'That's exactly the case, Watty,' said he calmly. 'Your friends will go their way, sadly enough, perhaps, but not censoriously; but others will not be so delicately-minded, and there will be plenty rude enough to say, who and what is she that treats us all in this fashion?'

"Yes, Dan," cried my father, with a flushed brow, and an eye flashing with passion, "he said those words to me, standing where you stand this instant! I know nothing more afterwards. I believe he said something about old friendship and school-days, but I heard it imperfectly, and I was relieved when he was gone, and that I could throw myself down into that chair, and thank God that I had not insulted an old friend under my own roof. It would actually seem as if some evil influence were over the place. The best-tempered have become cross; the good-natured have grown uncharitable; and even the shrewd fellows that, at least, know life and manners, have actually exhibited themselves as totally deficient in the commonest elements of judgment. Just think of Rutledge — who, if not a very

clever fellow, should, at all events, have picked up some share of luck by his position — just fancy what he has done: he has actually had the folly — I might well give it a worse name — to go to Curtis, and ask him to make some kind of apology to the Duke for his rude refusal of leave to shoot over his estate — a piece of impertinence that Curtis has never ceased to glory in and boast of — a refusal that the old fellow has, so to say, lived on ever since! — to ask him to retract and excuse it! I have no exact knowledge of what passed between them — indeed I only know what his Grace himself told me — but Curtis's manner must have been little short of outrage; and the only answer Rutledge could obtain from him was — 'Did your master send you with this message to me?' — a question, I fancy, the other was not disposed to answer. The upshot, however, was, that as the Duke was taking his walk this morning, after breakfast, he suddenly came upon Curtis, who was evidently waiting for him. If the Duke did not give me very exact details of the interview, I am left to conjecture from his manner, that it must have been one of no common kind. 'Your friend,' said his Grace, 'was pleased to tell me what he called some home truths; he took a rapid survey of the acts of the Government, accompanying it with a commentary as little flattering as may be; he called us all by very hard names, and did not spare our private characters. In fact, as he himself assured me, fearing so good an opportunity might not readily present itself of telling me a piece of his mind, he left very little unsaid on any topic that he could think of, concluding with a most meaning intimation, that although he had refused me the shooting of his wood-

cocks, he would be charmed to afford me the opportunity of another kind of sport — I suppose he meant a better mark for me to aim at — and so he left me.' Though nothing could possibly be in better taste or temper than the Duke's recital of the scene, it was easy to see that he was sorely pained and offended by it. Indeed he wound up by regretting that a very urgent necessity would recal him at once to town, and a civil assurance that he'd not fail to complete his visit at some more fortunate opportunity. I turned at once to seek out Curtis, and learn his version of the affair, but he and Ffrench had already taken their departure, this brief note being all their leave-taking: —

"'Dear Watty, — In your father's and indeed in your grandfather's day, one was pretty sure what company might be met with under your roof. I'm sorry to see times are changed, and deeply deplore that your circumstances make it necessary for you to fill your house with Government hacks, spies, and informers. Take my word for it, honest men and their wives won't like such associates; and though they sneer now at the Grinder's daughter, she'll be the best of your company ere long.

"'My compliments to his Grace, and say I hope he'll not forget that I have promised him some shooting.

'Yours truly,

M. Curtis.'

"A line from Ffrench followed: —

"'D. W. — As I came with Curtis, I must go with him; but I hope soon to see you, and explain

some things which I grieve to defer even for a short time.'"

"Now, Dan, I ask you, is this courteous — is it even fair and manly? They see me endeavouring to bring men together socially, who, whatever their political differences, might yet learn to know and esteem each other in private. They comprehend all the difficulty imposed by my wife's extreme youth and inexperience, and this is the aid they give me! But I know well what it means! The whole thing is part and parcel of that tyranny that a certain set of fellows have exercised over this country for the last century. A blind, misguided, indiscriminate hatred of England, and of Englishmen, is their only notion of a policy, and they'd stop short at nothing in their stupid animosity. They've mistaken their man, however, this time. Egad, they ought to have tried some other game before they ventured to bully me. In their blind ignorance, they fancied that because I entertained a Viceroy, I must necessarily be a Castle hack. Faith, if I become so yet, they've only themselves to thank for it. As it is, I no sooner read that note than I hastened down stairs to seek the Duke, and just overtook him in the shrubbery. I told him frankly the indignation I felt at a dictation which I suffered no man to assume towards me. I said more — I assured him that no sneers of party, nor any intimidation of a set, should ever prevent me giving the Government a support whenever the measure were such as in my conscience I approved of. I am the more free to say so, because I want nothing — I would accept of nothing from them; and I went so far as to say as much. 'I'll never

insult you with an offer, Carew,' was the Duke's reply to me, and we shook hands on our bargain!"

"It was that very shake-hands alarmed me!" said Dan, gravely; "I saw it from the window, and guessed there was something in the wind!"

"Come, come, Dan, it's not in your nature to be suspectful — you couldn't possibly suppose—"

"I never lose time in suspecting anybody," broke in MacNaghten; "but indeed it's not worth any one's while to plot against me! I only say, Watty, don't be hurried away by any momentary anger with Curtis and the like of him. You have a fine position, don't wreck it out of a mere pique!"

"I'll go abroad again! I've lived too long out of this wasp's nest to endure the eternal buzzing and stinging that goes on around me."

"I think you're right there," said MacNaghten.

My father made no reply, and looked anything but pleased at the ready concurrence in his plan.

"We shall never understand them, nor they us," said he, peevishly, after a pause.

MacNaghten nodded an affirmative.

"The Duke of course, then, remains here?" said Dan, after a pause.

"Of course he does not," replied my father, pettishly; "he has announced to me the urgent necessity of his return to Dublin, nor do I see that anything has since occurred to alter that contingency."

The tone in which he had spoken these words showed not only how he felt the taunt implied in Dan's remark, but how sincerely to his own conscience he acknowledged its justice. There was no doubt of it! My father's patriotism, that withstood all the blan-

dishments of "Castle" flattery, all the seductions of power, and all the bright visions of ambition, had given way under the impulse of a wounded self-love. That men so inferior to him should dictate and control his actions, presume to influence his whole conduct, and even exercise rule in his household, gave him deep offence, coming as it did at a moment when his spirit was chafed by disappointment; and thus, he that could neither have been bribed nor bought was entrapped by a trick and an accident.

Every one knows that there are little social panics as there are national ones — terrors for which none can account, leading to actions for which none can give the reason; so here, all of a sudden, all the guests discovered that they had reached the limit of their stay; some had to hasten home to receive visitors, others were engaged elsewhere; there were innumerable calls of duty, and affection, and business, all uttered with the accustomed sincerity, and listened to by my father with a cold acquiescence which assuredly gave no fresh obstacles to the departures.

As for my mother, her graciousness at the leave-takings only served to increase the displeasure her former indifference had created. It seemed as if her courtesy sprung out of the pleasure of being free from her guests; and as she uttered some little polite phrase in her broken language to each, the recipients looked anything but flattered at the alteration of her manner. The Viceroy alone seemed to accept these civilities literally; he vowed that he had never enjoyed three days more in his life; that Castle Carew and its hospitalities would hold the very first place in his future recollections of Ireland: these and such like, uttered

with the very best of manners, and with all the influence which rank could bestow, actually delighted my mother, who was not slow to contrast the highbred tone of the great personage with the less flattering deportment of her other guests.

It would not be a very pleasing task were we to play the eavesdropper, and, following the various carriages of the departing company, hear the comments now so freely bestowed on the host of Castle Carew. It is true some were kind-hearted enough to see all the difficulties of my father's position in the true light, and to hope that, by time and a little management, these might be overcome.

There were others less generous; but what they said it would be scarcely more graceful of me to repeat; enough, that my mother was the especial mark of the strictures — the censure of my father went no further than compassion! And, oh dear! when the world condescends to compassion, what execration is equal to it! How beautifully it draws up the full indictment of your failings, that it may extend its clemency to each! How carefully does it discriminate between your depravity and your weakness, that it may not wrong you! But how cutting is the hopefulness it expresses for your future, by suggesting some utterly impossible road for your reformation!

And now they were all gone — all, except Polly Fagan and MacNaghten; but Dan, indeed, was part of the household, and came and went as he liked. Fagan had sent his carriage to Bray, to meet his daughter, as had been agreed upon; but a letter from Polly came to say that Madame Carew had pressed her with so much kindness to remain, and that she herself was so happy,

that she sincerely hoped the permission might be accorded her. The note concluded by stating that Mr. Carew would visit Dublin by the end of the week, and take that opportunity of leaving her at home.

"Oh, que nous sommes bien, ainsi!" exclaimed my mother, as the little party of four sat down to dinner; and all seemed to applaud the sentiment but my father, who seemed far more thoughtful and grave than his wont. Even this, however, threw no gloom over the rest, who were in the very happiest and best of humours. My mother was in all the ecstasy of her now joyous nature, suddenly emancipated from the toilsome drudgery of a duty she disliked. Polly, flattered by the tone of perfect equality extended to her, and by the unequivocal preference of my mother for her, hourly developed more and more of those graces which only needed opportunity for their growth, and displayed charms of manner, and resources of mind, that actually delighted her companions; while in MacNaghten's happy nature and gay-heartedness there was the only other element wanting to make the party a most pleasant one.

The arrival of the letter-bag — that little moment which, in every country household, forms the privileged interruption to every care and every amusement — broke suddenly in upon their carouse; and, as my father unlocked the precious sack, each looked eagerly for his share of the contents.

"All for myself, I see," muttered he, "nothing but 'Walter Carew,' here. Your creditors are forgetting you, Dan — not even a note of reminder or remonstrance. Silence, of course, means consent, Miss Polly; your father says nothing against your stay. But what

is this, Josephine? — this looks as if meant for you: but it has been sent over half the post-offices of the kingdom, with 'Try Compton Basset, Caresfort and Chirck Castle,' I believe this is; there's no making out the address."

"Plain enough, I think," cried MacNaghten; "it is, 'Mad^me La Comtesse de Carew, à son Chateau, ou, en Ville, Irelande.'"

"At all events, it is for me," said my mother, breaking the seal with impatience. Scarcely had she opened the letter when she exclaimed, "Oh, la bonne chance — only think, Walter, here is Emile de Gabriac coming to Ireland!"

"You forget, dearest, that I have never seen him," said my father, dryly.

"Does that signify?" said she, with enthusiastic rapidity. "Is he not known over all Europe by reputation. That dear Emile, so good, so generous, so handsome, so full of accomplishments — rides so perfectly, sings so beautifully. Ah, ma chère c'est fait de vous," said she to Polly, "when you see him."

Polly only smiled and bowed, with an arch look of submission, while my father broke in, —

"But, how comes it that so much brilliancy should waste itself on the unprofitable atmosphere of Ireland? What is bringing him here?"

My mother continued to read on, heedless of the question, not, however, without showing by her countenance the various emotions which the letter excited; for while, at times, her colour came and went, and her eyes filled with tears, a smile would pass suddenly across her features, and at last a merry burst of laughter stopped her. "Shall I read it for you?" cried she,

"for it will save me a world of explanations. This is dated from our dear old country-house on the Loire, Chateau de Lesieux: —

"'April 20th.

"'MA CHÈRE ET MA BELLE FIFINE' — he always called me Fifine, when we were children. ["Humph!" muttered my father, "read on;" and she resumed] 'Ma belle Fifine — how the dear name recalls happy hours, gay, buoyant, and brilliant, with all that could make life a paradise! — when we were both so much in love with all the world, and, consequently, with each other!' Ah, oui," exclaimed she, in a tone so perfectly simple, as to make MacNaghten burst out into a laugh, which Polly with difficulty refrained from joining. — "'You,'" continued she, reading, "'you, ma belle, have doubtless grown wiser; but I remain the same dreamy, devoted thing you once knew me. Well, perhaps, we may soon have an opportunity to talk over all this; and so now no more of it. You may, perhaps, have heard — I cannot guess what news may or may not reach you in your far away solitudes — that the Cour de Cassation has decided against me; and that, consequently, they have not only rejected my claim, but have actually questioned my right to the domain of Chasse Loups, and the famous jewels which my grandfather received from Isabella of Spain.

"'They say — I'm not going to worry you with details — but they say something to this effect — that as we were engaged with Law in that great scheme of his — the Mississippi affair they called it — we stand responsible in all that we possess, to the creditors or the heirs, as if we ourselves were not the greatest

losers by that charlatan of the Rue Quincampoix! Perhaps you never heard of that notorious business, nor knew of a time when all Paris went mad together, and bartered everything of price and value for the worthless scrip of a mountebank's invention. How sorry I am, dearest Fifine, to tease you with all this; but I cannot help it. They have found — that is the lawyers — that there are two parties in existence, whose claims extend to our poor old chateau by some private arrangement contracted between my grandfather and the then Duc d'Orleans. One of these is Louis's own son, now living at Venice; the other — you'll scarcely believe me — yourself! Yes, my dear cousin, you possess a part right over Chasse Loups. There was a day when you might have had the whole! — not my fault that it was not so!'"

"Is this a lover's letter, or a lawyer's, Josephine?" said my father, dryly.

"Ah, you cannot understand Emile," said she, artlessly; "he is so unlike the rest of the world, poor fellow! But I'll read on.

"'It all comes to this, Fifine; you must give me a release, so they call it, and Louis, if I can find him out, must do something of the same kind, for I am going to be married' — [she paused for a few seconds, and then read on] — 'to be married to Mademoiselle de Nipernois, sister of Charles de Nipernois. When you went, remember, as a page to the Queen, you never saw ma belle Hortense, for she was educated at Bruges. Alas, oui! so is my episode to end also. Meanwhile I'm coming to see you, to obtain your signature to these tiresome papers, and to be, for a while at least, out of the way, since I have been un-

lucky enough to wound Auguste Vallaume, seriously, I'm afraid — all his own fault, however, as I will tell you at another time. Now, can you receive me — I mean is it inconvenient? — will it be in any way unpleasant? Does le bon Mari like or dislike us French — will he be jealous of our cousinage?'"

"On the score of frankness, Josephine, you may tell him, I have nothing to complain of," broke in my father, dryly.

"Is it not so?" rejoined my mother. "Emile is candour itself." She read — "'At all hazards, I shall try, Fifine. If he does not like me, he must banish me. The difficulty will be to know where; for I have debts on all sides, and nothing but marriage will set me right. Droll enough, that one kind of slavery is to be the refuge for another. Some of your husband's old associates here tell me he is charming — that he was the delight of all the society at one time. Tell me all about him. I can so readily like anything that belongs to you, I'm prepared already to esteem him.'"

"Most flattering," murmured my father.

"'It will be too late, dear cousin, to refuse me; for when this reaches you, I shall be already on the way to your mountains — are they mountains, by the way? — so then make up your mind to my visit with the best grace you can. I should fill this letter with news of all our friends and acquaintances here, but that I rely upon these very narratives to amuse you when we meet; not that there is anything very strange or interesting to recount. People marry, and quarrel, and make love, fight, go in debt, and die, in our enlightened age, without the slightest advancement on the wisdom

of our ancestors; and except that we think very highly of ourselves, and very meanly of all others, I do not see that we have made any considerable progress in our knowledge.

"'I am all eagerness to see you once again. Are you altered? — I hope and trust not. Neither fatter nor thinner, nor paler nor more carnation, than I knew you; not graver, I could swear. No, ma chère cousine, yours was ever a nature to extract brightness from what had been gloom to others. What a happy inspiration was it of that good Monsieur Carew to relieve the darkness of his native climate by such brilliancy!

"'Still how many sacrifices must this banishment have cost you! Do not deny it, Fifine. If you be not very much in love, this desolation must be a heavy infliction. I have just been looking at the map, and the whole island has an air of indescribable solitude and remoteness, and much further distant from realms of civilisation than I fancied. You must be my guide, Fifine: I will accept of no other to all those wonderful sea-caves and coral grottoes which I hear so much of! What excursions am I already planning — what delicious hours, floating over the blue sea, beneath those gigantic cliffs, that even in a wood-cut looks stupendous! And so you live almost entirely upon fish! I must teach your chef some Breton devices in cookery. My old tutor, who was a curé at Scamosse, taught me to dress soles "'"en gratin,"'" with two simple herbs to be found everywhere; so that, like Vincent de Paul, I shall be extending the blessing of cultivation in the realms of barbarism. I picture you strolling along the

yellow beach, or standing storm-lashed on some lone rock, with your favourite pet seal at your feet.'"

"Is the gentleman an idiot, or is he only ignorant?" broke in my father.

My mother gave a glance of half angry astonishment, and resumed — "'A thousand pardons, ma chère et bonne; but, with my habitual carelessness, I have been looking at Iceland, and not Ireland, on the map. You will laugh, I'm certain, but confess how natural was the mistake — how similar the names — how like are they, perhaps, in other respects. At all events, I cannot alter what I have written: it shall go, if only to let you have one more laugh at that silly Emile, whose blunders have so often amused you. Pray do not tell your ""dear husband"" of my mistake, lest his offended nationality should take umbrage; and I am resolved — yes, Fifine, I am determined on his liking me.'"

My father's face assumed an expression here that was far too much for MacNaghten's gravity; but my mother read on, unconcerned — "'And now I have but to say when I shall be with you. It may be about the 12th — not later than the 20th — of next month. I shall take no one but François with me — I shall not even bring the dogs — only Jocasse, my monkey, for whom, by the way, I beg to bespeak a quiet room, with a south aspect. I hope the climate will not injure him; but Doctor Reynault has given me numerous directions about his clothing, and a receipt for a white wine posset, that he assures me will be very bracing to his nervous system. You have no idea how susceptible he has grown latterly about noise and tumult. The canaille have taken to parade the streets, singing

and shouting their odious songs, and Jocasse has suffered much from the disturbance. I mentioned the fact to M. Mirabeau, whom I met at your aunt's the other night, and he remarked gravely, "'"It's a bad time for monkeys just now — 'singerie' has had its day."'" The expression struck me as a very hollow, if not a very heartless one; but I may say, en passant, that this same M. Mirabeau, whom it is the fashion to think clever and agreeable, is only abrupt and rude, with courage to say the coarse things that good-breeding retreats from! I am glad to find how thoroughly the Court dislikes him. They say that he has had the effrontery to tell the King the most disagreeable stories about popular discontent, distress, and so forth. I need scarcely say, that he met the dignified rebuke such under-bred observations merited.

"'And now, Fifine, to say adieu, until it be my happiness once again to embrace you, and that dear Carew, who must have more good qualities than I have known centred in one individual, to deserve you. Think of me, dearest cousin, and do not forget Jocasse.'"

"The association will aid you much," said my father, dryly.

"'Let him have a cheerful room, and put me anywhere, so that I have a place in your heart. Your dearly attached cousin,

"'Emile de Gabriac."

"Is that all?" asked my father, as she concluded.

"A few words on the turn-down — 'Hortense has just sent me her picture. She is blonde, but her eyes want colour; the hair, too, is sandy, and not silky; the mouth — but why do I go on? — it is not Fifine's.'"

"Our cousin is the most candid of mortals," said my father, quietly; "whatever opinion we may entertain of his other gifts, on the score of frankness he is unimpeachable. Don't you think so, Miss Polly?"

"His letter is a most unreserved one, indeed," said she, cautiously.

And now a silence fell on all, for each was following out in his own way some train of thought suggested by the Count's letter. As if to change the current of his reflections, my father once more turned to the letter-bag, and busied himself running hastily over some of the many epistles addressed to him. Apparently there was little to interest or amuse amongst them, for he threw them from him half read — some, indeed, when he had but decyphered the writers' names; one short note from Hackett, his man of business, alone seemed to excite his attention, and this he read over twice.

"Look at that, Dan," said he, handing the paper to Mac Naghten, who, walking to the window slowly, perused the following lines: —

"'Dear Sir, — In accordance with the directions contained in your note of Friday last, and handed to me by Mr. Fagan, I placed at his disposal all the deeds and securities at present in my possession, for him to select such as would appear sufficient guarantee for the sum advanced to you on that day. I now beg to state that he has made choice of the title to Lucksleven silver mine, and a bond of joint mortgage over a French estate, which I apprehend to form part of the dowry of Madame Carew. I endeavoured to induce him to make choice of some other equally valuable

document, not knowing whether this selection might be to your satisfaction; he, however, persisted, and referred to the tenor of your note to substantiate his right. Of course, I could offer no further opposition, and have now only to mention the circumstance for your information. I have the honour to be, dear sir, respectfully yours,

"'E. HACKETT.'"

"Curious enough, that, Dan!" muttered my father. Mac Naghten assented with a nod, and handed back the letter.

CHAPTER XI.

Politics and Newspapers.

THE venality and corruption which accomplished the Legislative Union between England and Ireland admit of as little doubt as of palliation. There was an epidemic of baseness over the land; and but few escaped the contagion. To whatever section of party an Irishman may belong, he never can cease to mourn over the degenerate temper of a time which exhibited the sad spectacle of a Legislature declaring its own downfall. Nor does the secret history of the measure offer much ground for consolation.

And yet, what a position did the Irish Parliament hold, but eighteen short years before that event! Never, perhaps, in the whole history of constitutional government, was the stand of a representative body more boldly maintained, alike against the power and the secret influence of the Crown; and England, in all the plenitude of her glory and influence, was forced to

declare the necessity of finally adjusting the differences between the two countries.

The very admission of separate interests seemed a fatal confession, and might — had a more cautious temper swayed the counsels of the Irish party — have led to very momentous consequences; but, in the enthusiasm of victory, all thought of the spoils was forgotten. It was a moment of national triumph, from which even the coldest could not withhold his sympathies. The "Dungannon Declaration" became at once the adopted sentiment of the national party; and it was agreed that Ireland was bound by no laws, save such as her own Lords and Commons enacted.

In the very crisis of this national enthusiasm was it that the Duke of Portland arrived as Viceroy in Ireland. His secret instructions counselled him to endeavour to prorogue the Parliament, and thus obtain a short breathing-time for future action. This policy, in the then temper of the people, was soon declared impossible. Mr. Grattan had already announced his intention of proposing a final settlement of the national differences by a "Bill of Rights," and the country would not brook any delay as to their expectations.

But one other safe course remained, which was, by a seeming concurrence in the views of the Irish party, to affect that a change had come over the spirit of English legislation towards Ireland, and a sincere desire grown up to confirm her in the possession of "every privilege not inconsistent with the stability of the empire." Mr. Grattan was induced to see the Viceroy in private, and submit to his Grace his intended declaration of rights. Without conceding the slightest alteration in his plan, the great leader was evidently im-

pressed by the conciliating tone of the Duke, and, with a generous credulity, led to believe in the most favourable dispositions of the Government towards Ireland. The measure in itself was so strong, and so decisive, that the Duke could not say how it would be received by his party. He had no time to ask for instructions, for Parliament was to assemble on the day but one after; and thus was he driven to a policy of secret influence — the origin of that school of corruption which ultimately was to effect the doom of Irish nationality.

I am sorry to be obliged to impose upon my reader even so much of a digression; but the requirements of my story demand it. I wish, as briefly of course as may be, to place before him a state of society wherein as yet the arts of corruption had made no great progress, and in which the open bribery of a subsequent time would have been perfectly impossible.

This was in reality a great moment in Irish history. The patriotism of the nation had declared itself not less manfully than practically. The same avowal which pronounced independence also proclaimed the principles of free trade, and that the ports of Ireland were open to all foreign countries not at war with England. It is humiliating enough to contrast the patriotic spirit of those times with the miserable policy of popular leaders in our own day; but in the names of the men who then swayed her counsels, we read some of the greatest orators and statesmen of our country — a race worthy of nobler successors than those who now trade upon the wrongs of Ireland, and whose highest aspirations for their country are in the despotism of an ignorant and intolerant priesthood.

The Duke of Portland was not ill-suited to the task before him. A man of more shining abilities — one who possessed in a higher degree the tact of winning over his opponents, might have awakened suspicion and distrust; but his was precisely the stamp and temperament which suggest confidence; and in his moderate capacity and easy nature there seemed nothing to excite alarm. "Bonhommie" — shame that we must steal a French word for an English quality! — was his great characteristic; and all who came within the circle of his acquaintance felt themselves fascinated by his free and unpretending demeanour.

To him was now entrusted the task of sowing schism among the members of the Irish party — the last and only resource of the English Government to thwart the progress of national independence. The Opposition had almost every element of strength. Amongst them were the first and most brilliant orators of the day — men trained to all the habits of debate, and thoroughly masters of all Irish questions. They possessed the entire confidence of the great body of the people, asserting, as they did, the views and sentiments of the country; and they were, what at that time had its own peculiar value, men of great boldness and intrepidity. There was but one feature of weakness in the whole party, and this was the almost inevitable jealousy which is sure to prevail where many men of great abilities are mixed up together, and where the success of a party must alternately depend upon qualities the most discrepant and opposite. The very purest patriotism is sure to assume something of the character of the individual; and in these varying tints of individuality, the Irish Government had now to seek for

the chance of instilling those doubts and hesitations which ultimately must lead to separation.

Nor was this the only artifice to which they descended. They also invented a policy which, in later days, has been essayed with very indifferent success — which was, to outbid the national party in generosity, and to become actual benefactors where mere justice was asked at their hands: a very dangerous game, which, however well adapted for a critical emergency, is one of the greatest peril as a line of policy and a system of government. In the spirit of this new tactic was it that Mr. Bagenal's motion to confer some great mark of national gratitude on Mr. Grattan was quickly followed by an offer of the Viceroy to bestow upon him the Viceregal Palace in the Phœnix Park, as "a suitable residence for one who had conferred the greatest services on his country, and as the highest proof the Government could give of their value of such services." A proposal of such unbounded generosity was sure to dim the lustre of the popular enthusiasm, and at the same time cast a shadow of ministerial protection over the patriot himself, who, in the event of acceptance, would have been the recipient of royal, and not of national, bounty. And when, in fact, the grant of a sum of money was voted by Parliament, the splendour of the gift was sadly tarnished by the discussion that accompanied it!

Enough has here been said to show the general policy of that short but eventful administration; and now to our story.

My father's reception of the Viceroy had blazed in all the ministerial papers with a kind of triumphant announcement of the progress the Government were

making in the esteem and confidence of the Irish gentry. Walter Carew was quoted as the representative of a class eminently national, and one most unlikely to be the mark for Castle intrigue or seduction. His large fortune was expatiated on, and an "authentic assurance" put forth that he had already refused the offer of being made a Privy Councillor. These statements were sure to provoke rejoinder. The national papers denied that the hospitalities of Castle Carew had any peculiar or political significance. It was very natural that one of the first of the gentry should receive the representative of his Sovereign with honour, and pay him every possible mark of respect and attention. But that Walter Carew had done any more than this, or had sacrificed anything of his old connection with his party, the best contradiction lay in the fact, that his guests contained many of the very foremost and least compromising men of the Liberal party; and "Curtis" was quoted in a very conspicuous type as the shortest refutation of such a charge.

It was, unfortunately, a moment of political inaction — a lull in the storm of Parliamentary conflict — when this discussion originated; and the newspapers were but too happy to have any theme to occupy the attention of their readers. The Castle press became more confident and insulting every day, and at last tauntingly asked why and how did this great champion of nationality — Curtis — take leave of Castle Carew? The question was unreplied to, and consequently appeared again, and in larger capitals, followed by an article full of inuendo and insinuation, and conveying the most impertinent allusions to the antiquated section of party to which Curtis belonged.

It is notorious that a subject totally devoid of any interest in itself will, by the bare force of repetition, assume a degree of importance far above its due, and ultimately engage the sympathies of many for or against it. Such was the case here; certain personalities, that occasionally were thrown out, giving a piquancy to the controversy and investing it with the attraction of town gossip. "Falkner's Journal," "The Press," "The Post," and "The Freeman," appeared each morning with some new contribution on the same theme; and letters from, and contradictions to, "A Visitor at Castle Carew," continued to amuse the world of Dublin.

The fashionable circles enjoyed recitals which contained the names of so many of their own set; the less distinguished were pleased with even such passing peeps at a world from which they were excluded; and thus the discussion very soon usurped the place of all other subjects in public interest.

It was remarked throughout the controversy that the weight of authority lay all with the Castle press. Whatever bore the stamp of real information was on that side; and the national journals were left merely to guess and surmise, while their opponents made distinct assertions. At last, to the astonishment of the town, appeared a letter in "Falkner's Journal" from Curtis. He had been ill of the gout; and, as it seemed, had only become aware of the polemic the preceding day. Indeed, the tone of the epistle showed that the irritability consequent on his malady was still over him. After a brief explanation of his silence, he went on thus: —

"The Castle hacks have asked, why and how did

Curtis take his leave of Castle Carew? Now without inquiring by what right these low scullions presume to put such a question, I'll tell them — Curtis left when he discovered the company by whom he was surrounded; when he found that he should sit down at the same table with a knavish pack of English adventurers, bankrupt in character and beggars in pocket.

"When he saw the house where his oldest friend in the world was wont to gather round him all that was eminently Irish, and where a generous hospitality developed a hearty and noble conviviality, converted into a den of scheming and intriguing politicians, seeking to snare support by low flattery, or to entrap a vote, in the confidence of the bottle; when he saw this, and more than this — that the best names and the best blood in the land were slighted, in order to show some special and peculiar attention to vulgar wealth, or still more vulgar pretension, Curtis thought it high time to take his leave. This is the why; and as to the how, he went away in the same old conveniency that he arrived by; and though drawn by a sorry hack, and driven by a ragged Irishman, he felt prouder as he sat in it than if his place had been beside a duke in the king's livery, with a coach paid for out of the pockets of the people.

"This is the answer, therefore, to your correspondent. And if he wants any further information, will you tell him, that it will be more in accordance with the habits of Irish gentlemen if he'll address himself personally to Mr. Curtis, 12, Ely Place, than by any appeal in the columns of a newspaper.

"And now, Mr. Editor, a word for yourself and the others. I know nothing about the habits of your

order, nor the etiquette of the press; but this I do know, I am a private gentleman, living, so far, at least, as you and the like of you are concerned, out of the world: I am very unlikely to fill a paragraph either among the marriages or the births; and if — mark me well, for I am not joking — you, or any of you, print my name again in your pages, except to announce my decease, I will break every bone in your body; and this 'without prejudice,' as the attorneys say, to any future proceedings I may reserve for your correspondent."

None who knew Curtis doubted for an instant the authenticity of this letter, though many at the time fancied it must be a queer quiz upon his style. The effect of it was, however, marvellous; for, in the most implicit confidence that he meant to keep his word, his name entirely dropped out of the discussion, which, however, raged as violently, if not more violently, than ever. Personalities of the most offensive kind were interchanged; and the various guests were held up, with little histories of their private life, by the journals of one side or the other.

Up to this moment my father's name had never been regularly introduced into the discussion. Regrets, it is true, were insinuated that he who could afford the shortest and most satisfactory explanations of everything should not condescend to give the public such information. It was deplored that one who so long enjoyed the confidence of the national party should feel himself bound to maintain a silence on questions which a few words would suffice to make intelligible. Gradually these regrets grew into remonstrances, and even threatened to become reproach. Anonymous

letters, in the same spirit, were addressed to him in great numbers; but they all failed in their object — for the best reason, that my father saw none of them. A feverish cold, attended with some return of an old gout attack, had confined him to bed for some weeks, so that he had never heard of the controversy; all the newspapers, filled as they were with it, having been cautiously withheld from him by the careful watchfulness of MacNaghten.

Such was the state of matters as my father, still weak from his attack, descended, for the first time, to the drawing-room. MacNaghten had persuaded my mother to accompany him on a short drive through the grounds, when my father, whom they had left in his room, thought he would make an effort to get down stairs, and surprise them on their return. He was seated at an open window that looked out upon a flower-garden, enjoying, with all an invalid's relish, the balmy air of a summer's day, and feeling as if he drank in health at every stir of the leaves by the light wind. His illness had not only greatly debilitated him, but had even induced a degree of indolent inaction very foreign to the active habit of his mind in health; and instead of experiencing his wonted curiosity to know what the world had been doing during his illness, he was actually happy in the thought of the perfect repose he was enjoying, undisturbed by a single care. The rattling of wheels on the ground at last gave token of some one coming, and a few moments after, my father heard the sound of voices in the hall. Resolved to deny himself to all strangers, he had risen to reach the bell, when the door opened, and Rutledge entered.

"Why, they told me you were in bed, Carew," cried he, endeavouring by a half-jocular manner to conceal the shock my father's wasted appearance imparted. "They said I could not possibly see you, so that I had to send up a few lines on my card to say how urgently I wished it, and meanwhile came in to await your answer."

"They only said truly," muttered my father. "I have crept down to-day, for the first time, and I'm not quite sure that I have done prudently."

"What has it been? — gout — rheumatic fever?"

"Neither; a bad cold neglected, and then an old ague on the back of it."

"And of course the fellows have bled and blistered you, without mercy. My medical skill is borrowed from the stable; hot mashes and double body-clothes are generally enough for a common attack; but rich fellows like you cannot get off so cheaply. And madam — how is she?"

"Perfectly well, thank you. And how are all your friends?"

"As well as men can be who are worried and badgered every hour of the twenty-four. It's no use in sending Englishmen here — they are never trusted! I don't believe it's possible to find an honester man, nor a truer friend to Ireland, than Portland; but his Saxon blood is quite enough to mar his utility, and poison every effort he makes to be of service."

"The children are paying off the scores of their fathers, Rutledge. The sentiment that has taken some centuries to mature, can scarcely be treated like a mere prejudice."

"Very true; but what bad policy it is — as policy

— to obstruct the flow of concessions, even coming from a suspected channel. It's rather too hard to criticise them for doing the very things we ask them."

"I have not looked into a newspaper these few weeks," said my father, half wearied of the theme.

"So that you know nothing, then, of —." He stopped short, for he just caught himself in time.

"I know nothing whatever of the events that have occurred in that interval; and, however inglorious the confession, Rutledge, I must make it, I'd almost as soon live over my attack again as hear them. Take it as a sick man's peevishness or sound philosophy, as you may; but, in the jarring, squabbling world we live in, there's nothing so good as to let bygones be bygones."

"That's taking for granted that anything is ever a 'bygone,' Walter; but, faith, my experience says that we are feeling, to the end of centuries, the results of the petty mischances that befell us in the beginning of them."

My father sighed, but it was more in weariness than sorrow; and Rutledge said, —

"I came out to have a long chat with you, Walter, about various things, but I fear talking fatigues you."

"It does fatigue me — I'm not equal to it," said my father, faintly.

"It's unlucky, too," said the other, half peevishly, "one so seldom can catch you alone; and though MacNaghten is the best fellow in the world —"

"You must still say nothing against him, at least in my hearing," added my father, as if to finish the sentence for him.

"I was only going to observe, that in all that regards politics —"

"Pardon my interrupting you again," broke in my father; "but Dan never pretended to know anything about them; nor is it likely that a fellow that felt the turf a contamination, will try to cultivate his morals by the intrigues of party."

Rutledge affected to laugh at the sneering remark, and after a moment resumed, —

"Do you know, then, it was precisely about that very subject of politics I came out to talk with you to-day. The Duke told me of the generous way you expressed yourself to him during his visit here; and that, although not abating anything of your attachment to what you feel a national cause, you never would tie yourself hand and foot to party, but stand free to use your influence at the dictates of your own honest conviction. Now, although there is no very important question at issue, there are a number of petty, irritating topics kept continually before Parliament by the Irish party, which, without the slightest pretension to utility, are used as means of harassing and annoying the Government."

"I never heard of this before, Rutledge; but I know well, if the measures you speak of have Grattan, and Flood, and Ponsonby, and others of the same stamp, to support them, they are neither frivolous nor contemptible; and if they be not advocated by the leaders of the Irish party, you can afford to treat them with better temper."

"Be that as it may, Walter, the good men of the party do not side with these fellows. But I see all this worries you, so let's forget it!" And so taking a

turn through the room, he stopped opposite a racing print, and said — "Poor old Gadfly, how she reminds me of old times; going along with her head low, and looking dead beat when she was just coming to her work. That was the best mare ever you had, Carew!"

"And yet I lost heavily on her," said my father, with a half sigh.

"Lost! Why the report goes that you gained above twenty thousand by her the last year she ran."

"'Common report,' as Figaro says, 'is a common liar;' my losses were very nearly one-half more! It was a black year in my life. I began it badly in Ireland, and ended it worse abroad!"

The eager curiosity with which Rutledge listened, suddenly caught my father's attention, and he stopped short, saying — "These are old stories now, and scarcely worth remembering. But here comes my wife; she'll be glad to see you, and hear all the news of the capital, for she has been leading a stupid life of it these some weeks back."

However uneasy my mother and MacNaghten might have been lest Rutledge should have alluded to the newspaper attacks, they were soon satisfied on that point; and the evening passed over pleasantly, in discussing the sayings and doings of the Dublin world.

It was late when Rutledge rose to take his leave, and my father had so far rallied by the excitement of conversation, that he already felt himself restored to health; and his last words to his guest at parting were —

"I'll call and see you, Rutledge, before the week is over."

CHAPTER XII.

Showing that, "What is Cradled in Shame is Hearsed in Sorrow."

ACCUSTOMED all his life to the flattery which surrounds a position of some eminence, my father was not a little piqued at the coldness of his friends during his illness. The inquiries after him were neither numerous nor hearty. Some had called once or twice to ask how he was; others had written brief excuses for their absence; and many contented themselves with hearing that it was a slight attack, which a few days would see the end of. Perhaps there were not many men in the kingdom less given to take umbrage at trifles than my father. Naturally disposed to take the bold and open line of action in every affair of life, he never suspected the possibility of a covert insult; and that any one could cherish ill-feeling to another, without a palpable avowal of hostility, was a thing above his conception. At any other time, therefore, this negligence, or indifference, or whatever it was, would not have occasioned him a moment's unpleasantness. He would have explained it to himself in a dozen ways, if it ever occurred to him to require explanation. Now, however, he was irritable from the effects of a malady peculiarly disposed to ruffle nervous susceptibility; while the chagrin of the late Viceregal visit, and its abrupt termination, was still over him. There are little eras in the lives of the best-tempered men when everything is viewed in wrong and discordant colours, and when, by a perverse ingenuity, they seek out reasons for their own unhappiness in events and incidents that have no possible bearing on the question. Having

once persuaded himself that his friends were faithless to him, he set about accounting for it by every casuistry he could think of. I have lived too long abroad; I have mixed too much in the great world, thought he, to be able to conform to this small and narrow circle. I am not local enough for them. I cannot trade on the petty prejudices they love to cherish, and which they foolishly think means being national. My wider views of life are a rebuke to their pettiness; and it's clear we do not suit each other. To preserve my popularity I should have lived at home, and married at home; never soared beyond a topic of Irish growth, and voted at the tail of those two or three great men who comprise within themselves all that we know of Irish independence. "Even idolatry would be dear at that price," cried he aloud, at the end of his reflections — bitter and unpleasant reveries in which he had been sunk as he travelled up to town some few days after the events related in the last chapter. Matters of business with his law-agent had called him to the capital, where he expected to be detained for a day or two. My mother had not accompanied him, her state of health at the time requiring rest and quietude. Alone, an invalid, and in a frame of, to him, unusual depression, he arrived at his hotel at nightfall. It was not the "Drogheda Arms," where he stopped habitually, but the "Clare," a smaller and less frequented house in the same street, and where he hoped to avoid meeting with his ordinary acquaintances.

Vexed with everything, even to the climate, to which he wrongfully ascribed the return of his malady, he was bent on making immediate arrangements to leave Ire-

land, and for ever. His pecuniary affairs were, it is true, in a condition of great difficulty and embarrassment; still, with every deduction, a very large income, or, at least, what for the Continent would be thought so, would remain; and with this he determined to go abroad, and seek out some spot more congenial to his tastes and likings, and, as he also fancied, more favourable to his health.

The hotel was almost full, and my father with difficulty obtained a couple of rooms; and even for these he was obliged to await the departure of the occupant, which he was assured would take place immediately. In the meanwhile, he had ordered his supper in the coffee-room, where now he was seated, in one of those gloomy-looking stalls, which, in those times, were supposed to comprise all that could be desired of comfort and isolation.

It was, indeed, a new thing for him to find himself thus. He, the rich — the flattered — the high-spirited — the centre of so much worship and adulation — whose word was law upon the turf, and whose caprices gave the tone to fashion, the solitary occupant of a dimly-lighted division in a public coffee-room, undistinguished and unknown. There was something in the abrupt indifference of the waiter that actually pleased him, ministering, as it did, to the self-tormentings of his reflections. All seemed to say, "This is what you become when stripped of the accidents of wealth and fortune — these are your real claims." There was no deference to him there. He had asked for the newspaper, and been curtly informed, "that Falkner was engaged by the gentlemen in the next box;" so was he left to his own lucubrations, broken in upon only

by the drowsy, monotonous tone of his neighbour in the adjoining stall, who was reading out the paper to a friend. Either the reader had warmed into a more distinct elocution, or my father's ears had become more susceptible by habit, but at length he found himself enabled to overhear the contents of the journal, which seemed to be a rather flippant criticism on a late debate in the Irish House of Commons.

A motion had been made by the Member for Cavan, for leave to bring in a bill to build ships of war for Ireland, a proposition so palpably declaring a separate and independent nationality, that it not only incurred the direct opposition of Government, but actually met with the disapprobation of the chief men of the Liberal party, who saw all the injury that must accrue to just and reasonable demands, by a course of policy thus exaggerated. Falkner went even further; for he alleged that the motion was a trick of the Castle party, who were delighted to see the patriots hastening their own destruction, by a line of action little short of treason. The arguments of the journalist, in support of this view, were numerous and acute. He alleged the utter impossibility of the measure ever being accepted by the House, or sanctioned by the Crown. He showed its insufficiency for the objects proposed, were it even to become law; and, lastly, he proceeded to display all the advantages the Government might derive from every passing source of disunion amongst the Irish party — schisms which, however insignificant at first, were daily widening into fatal breaches of all confidence. His last argument was based on the fact, that had the Ministry anticipated any serious trouble by the discussion, they would never have displayed such utter

indifference about mustering their forces. "We saw not," said the writer, "the accustomed names of Townley, Tisdale, Loftus, Skeffington, and fifty more such, on the division. Old Roach didn't whistle up one of his pack, but hunted down the game with the fat poodles that waddle after the Viceroy through the Castle-yard."

"M'Cleary had a caricature of the Portland hunt this morning in his window," cried the listener, "and capital likenesses there are of Bob Uniack and Vandeleur! Morris, too, is represented by a lame dog, that stands on a little eminence, and barks vigorously, but makes no effort to follow the chase."

"Much they care for all the ridicule and all the obloquy you can throw on them," replied the reader. "They well know that the pensions and peerages that await them will survive newspaper abuse, though every word of it was true as Gospel. Now, here's a list of them alphabetically arranged, and will you tell me how many will read or remember one line of them a dozen years hence. Besides, there is a kind of exaggeration in these attacks that deprives them of credit; when you read such stories as that of Carew, for instance, throwing a main with the dice to decide whether or not he'd vote with the Government."

"I would not say that it was impossible, however," broke in the other. "Carew's a confirmed gambler, and we know what that means; and as to his having a particle of principle, if Rutledge's story be true, he has done far worse than this."

My father tried to arise from his seat; he even attempted to call out, and impose silence on those whose next words might possibly contain an insult irreparable

for ever: but he could not do either; a cold sweat broke over him, and he sat powerless and almost fainting, while they continued, —

"I'd be slow to take Master Bob's word, either in praise or dispraise of any man," said the first speaker.

"So should I, if he could make it the subject of a wager," said the other; "but here is a case quite removed from all chance of the betting-ring."

"And what does it amount to if true?" said the other. "He married somebody's illegitimate daughter. Look at the peerage — look at one-half the small sovereignties of Europe."

"That's not the worst of it at all," broke in the former. "It was the way he got his wife."

"Then, I suppose, I have not heard the story aright: how was it?"

"Rutledge's version is something in this wise: — Carew had won such enormous sums at play from one of the French princes, that at last he actually held in his hands some of the rarest of the crown jewels as pledges. One of the ministers having heard of the transaction went to the prince, and insisted, under threat of a public exposure, on an immediate settlement of the debt. In this terrible dilemma, the Prince had nothing for it but to offer Carew the valuable paintings and furniture of his chateau — reputed to be the most costly in the whole kingdom. The report goes, that the pictures alone were estimated at several millions of francs. Carew at once accepts the proposition; but, as if not to be outdone in generosity, even by a royal prince, he lets it be known that he will only accept of one solitary article from the whole collection; rather, in fact, a souvenir than a ransom. I

suppose, the prince, like everybody else, felt that this was very handsome conduct, for he frankly said — 'The chateau, and all within it, are at his disposal — I reserve nothing.' Armed with this authority, Carew never waits for morning, but starts that night, by post, for Auvergne, where the chateau lies. I believe it is not ascertained whether he was previously acquainted with the circumstances of the Prince's domestic affairs. The probability, however, is, that he must have been; for within a week, he returned to Paris, bringing with him the object selected as his choice, in the person of a beautiful girl, the natural daughter of his royal highness. Whether he married her then under compulsion, or, subsequently, of his own free will, is to this day a secret. One thing, however, is certain: he was banished from the French territory, by a summary order, which gave him barely time to reach the coast and embark. Of course, once in England, he had only to select some secluded out-of-the-way spot for a while, and there could be no likelihood of leaving any trace to his adventure. Indeed, the chances are, that Rutledge is about the only man who could have unravelled so tangled a skein. How he ever contrived to do so, is more than I can tell you!"

My father sat listening to this story more like one, whose faculties are under the dominion of some powerful spell, than of a man in the free exercise of reason. There was something in the mingled truth and falsehood of the tale, that terrified and confused him. Up to that moment he had no notion in what a light his conduct could be exhibited, nor could he see by what means the calumny could be resented. There was, however, one name he could fix upon. Rutledge, at least, should

be accountable! There was enough of falsehood in the story to brand him as a foul slanderer, and he should not escape him.

By an effort that demanded all his strength, my father rose, the cold sweat dropping from his forehead, and every limb trembling, from weakness and passion. His object was to present himself to the strangers in the adjoining box, and by declaring his name, to compel them to bring home to Rutledge the accusation he had overheard. He had no time, had he even head, to weigh all the difficulties of such a line of procedure. It was not at such a moment that he could consider the question calmly and deliberately. Next to the poignant sense of injury, the thought of vengeance was uppermost in his mind; and the chances were, that he was ready to wreak his fury on the first object that should present itself. Fortunately, might I not rather say unfortunately, since nothing could be more disastrous than the turn affairs were fated to take; it seemed, however, at the moment, as though it were good fortune, that when my father, by an immense effort, succeeded in reaching the adjoining box, the former occupants had departed. Several persons were leaving the coffee-room at the same instant; and though my father tried to hasten after them, and endeavour to recognise the voices he had overheard, his strength was unequal to the effort, and he sank back, powerless, on a bench. He beckoned to a waiter who was passing, and questioned him eagerly as to their names, and giving him a guinea, promised as much more if he should follow them to their residences, and bring back their addresses. But the man soon returned to say, that as the strangers were not remarked by him, he

had no clue whatever to their detection in the crowded streets of the capital.

It struck my father as though destiny itself pointed out Rutledge as the only one of whom he could seek reparation; and now he retired to his room, to weigh the whole question in his mind, and see by what means, while gratifying his thirst for vengeance, he should best avoid that degree of exposure which would be fatal to the future happiness of my mother.

In this lay all the difficulty. To demand satisfaction from Rutledge required that he should specify the nature of the injury, open the whole history of the slander, and, while giving contradiction to all that was false, publish to the world a true version of an incident that, up to that moment, he had never confided to his dearest friend. Terrible as seemed the task of such a revelation, it was nothing in comparison with what he judged would be the effect upon my mother, when she came to learn the course of events which preceded her marriage.

And now this must be given to the world, with all that accompaniment of gossip and scandal such a story would be sure to evoke. Was this possible? — could he venture to embark upon such a sea of peril as this? — could he dare to confront difficulties that would rise up against him at every step and in every relation of life, to assail his political reputation to-day — to slur his personal honour to-morrow — to cast shame upon her whose fair fame was dearer to him than life itself twice told — to be an inheritance of disgrace to his children, if he were to have children? No, no! For such an exposure as this nothing short of downright desperation could give courage.

Far from serving to allay his passion for vengeance, these difficulties but deepened the channel of his wrath, and made the injury itself appear more irreparable. Nor did he know whom to consult at such a crisis. To unbosom himself to MacNaghten was like confessing that he could do, from personal motives, what he had shrunk from in the full confidence of his friendship; and such an avowal would, he was well aware, give heartfelt pain to his best friend in the world. Many other names occurred to him, but each was accompanied by some especial difficulty. It was a case which demanded great discretion, and, at the same time, promptitude and decision. To have allowed any interval for discussion would have been to incur that publicity which my father dreaded beyond all.

The indignant energy of his mind had given a kind of power to his emaciated and wasted frame; and, as he paced his room, in passionate emotion, he felt as though all his wonted strength and vigour were returning to "stand by him" in his hour of peril. He had opened his window, to admit the cool air of the night; and scarcely had he thrown wide the sash, when the cry of a newsvender met his ear.

"Here's the 'List of the Castle hacks,' to be sold to the highest bidder, the Government having no further use for them, with the pedigree and performances set forth in full, and a correct account of the sums paid for each of them."

To this succeeded a long catalogue of gentlemen's names, which were received by the mob that followed the hawker with shouts and cries of derision. Groan followed groan, as they were announced, and my father listened, with an agonising suspense, lest he

should hear his own amidst the number; but, to his inexpressible relief, the fellow concluded his muster-roll without alluding to him. Just, however, as he was about to close the window, the man again broke out with — "On Saturday next will be published the account of the five bought in by the Crown; and Mark Brown, Sam Vesey, William Burton, Ross Mahon, and Walter Carew, will be given in full, on a separate sheet, for one halfpenny!"

A wild outburst of derisive laughter from the crowd followed, and my father heard no more.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Midnight Rencontre.

My father had walked several streets of the capital before he could collect his thoughts, or even remember where he was. He went along, lost to everything save memory of his vengeance. He tried to call to mind the names of those on whose zeal and devotedness he could reckon; but so imbued with suspicion had his mind become — so distrustful of everything and every one, that he actually felt as if deserted by all the world, without one to succour or stand by him.

Thus rambling by chance, he found himself in Stephen's Green, where he sat down to rest under one of those great trees, which in those times shaded the favourite promenade of Dublin. Directly in front of him was a large mansion, brilliantly lighted up, and crowded by a numerous company, many of whom were enjoying the balmy air of a summer's night, on the balcony in front of the windows. As they moved to and fro, passing back and forwards, my father could

recognise several that he was acquainted with, and some that he knew most intimately.

Filled with one consuming thought, he fancied that he heard his name at every moment; that every allusion was to him, and each burst of laughter was uttered in derision at his cost. His rage had worked him up almost to madness, and he could hardly restrain himself from calling out, and replying aloud to these fancied insults and aspersions on his character.

At such moments of doubt as these, certainty flashes on the mind with a power of concentration and resolution that seems to confer strength for anything, however difficult. So was it to my father, as suddenly the tones of a well-known voice struck on his ear, and he heard the easy laugh of him that he hated most of all the world. It was Barry Rutledge himself, who now was leaning over the balcony, in the centre of a group, whom he was evidently entertaining by his remarks.

The bursts of laughter which at each moment interrupted him, showed how successfully his powers of entertaining were being exercised, while at intervals a dead silence around proved the deep attention with which they listened.

It was at the moment when, by the death of the Marquis of Rockingham, a new ministry was formed in England, and the Duke of Portland recalled from his vice-royalty, to be succeeded by Lord Temple. The changes that were like to ensue upon this new appointment were actively discussed in society, and now formed the subject of conversation on the balcony.

"You will be at large again, Barry," said one of the group: "these new people won't know your value."

"Pardon me!" cried he, laughing, "I'm handed over with Cotterell and the state coach, as functionaries that cannot be easily replaced. Let them try and manage Dublin without me! I defy them! Who knows every flaw and crack of reputation — every damaged character, and every tarnished fame, as I do? Who can tell each man's price, from knowing his weak points? Who can play off the petty jealousies of rivals against each other; disgust them with their party; and buy them cheap for the Castle? Who but Barry Rutledge? I'll offer a wager of five hundred, that there is not a family secret I can't have the key to within one week."

"What the devil ever induced you to take up such a career?" asked a deep-voiced, burly-looking country gentleman.

"The turf gave me the hint," said Rutledge, coolly. "I lost every sixpence I once possessed, when I backed this horse or betted on that one. I regained a considerable share of my loss when I limited myself to looking out for what they style 'disqualifications' — to discover that Wasp wasn't a two-year-old, or that Muffin was clean bred; that Terry had won before, and that Ginger was substituted for another. I saw that political life was pretty much the same kind of game, and that there would be a grand opening for the first fellow that brought his racing craft to bear on the great world of state affairs. I'm sure others will follow out the line, and doubtless eclipse all the cleverness of Barry Rutledge; but at all events, they can't deny him the merit of the invention. They talk to you about skilful secretaries and able debaters; I tell you flatly I've got more votes for the Government than

any one of them all, and just in the way I've mentioned. Was it Dick Talbot's convictions or his wife's losses at loo that made him join us last session? How did Rowley come over? Ask Harvey Bruce who horsewhipped him in the mess-room at Kells. Why did Billy Hamilton desert his party? Lady Mary may tell you; and if she won't, George Gordon, of the Highlanders, can. What's the use of going through the list, from old Hemphill, that was caught cheating at picquet, down to Watty Carew, with his wife, won at a game of Barocco?"

"Slanderer — scoundrel!" cried out my father, in a voice hoarse with passion; and as the words were uttered, the balcony was suddenly deserted, and the rushing sounds of many people descending the stairs together were as quickly heard. For a few seconds my father stood uncertain and undecided; but then, with a bold precipitancy, he seemed to calculate every issue in an instant, and made up his mind how to proceed. He dashed across the street towards the dark alley which flanked the "Green," and along which ran a deep and stagnant ditch, of some ten or twelve feet in width. Scarcely had he gained the shelter of the trees, when a number of persons rushed from the house into the street, and hurried hither and thither in pursuit. As they passed out, my father was enabled to recognise several whom he knew; but for one only had he any care; on him he fastened his eyes with the eager stedfastness of hate, and tracked him as he went, regardless of all others.

Without concert among themselves, or any clue to direct their search, they separated in various directions. Still my father held his place unchanged, doubtless

revolving in that brief interval the terrible consequences of his act. Some fifteen or twenty minutes might have thus elapsed, and now he saw one return to the house, speedily followed by another, and then a third. At last Rutledge came alone; he walked along slowly, and as if deep in meditation. As though revolving the late incident in his mind, he stood for a moment looking up at the windows, and probably speculating in his mind on the precise spot occupied by him who had uttered the insult.

"Here, beneath the trees," said my father, in a low, but clear accent; and Rutledge turned, and hastened across the street. It will, of course, never be known whether he understood these words as coming from a stranger, or from some one of his own friends, suggesting pursuit in a particular direction.

My father only waited to see that the other was following, when he turned and fled. The entrances to the park, or green, as it was called, were by small pathways across the moat, closed by low, wooden wickets. Across one of these my father took his way, tearing down the gate, with noise sufficient to show the course he followed.

Rutledge was close at his heels, and already summoning all his efforts to come up with him, when my father turned round and stood.

"We are alone!" cried he; "there is none to interrupt us. Now, Barry Rutledge, you or I, or both of us, mayhap, shall pass the night here!" and, as he spoke, he drew forth his sword-cane from the walking-stick that he carried.

"What! — is that Carew? Are you Walter Carew?" said Rutledge, advancing towards him.

"No nearer — not a step nearer! — or, by heaven! I'll not answer for my passion — draw your sword, and defend yourself!"

"Why, this is sheer madness, Watty. What is your quarrel with me?"

"Do you ask me? — do you want to hear why I called you a scoundrel and a slanderer? — or is it that I can brand you as both, at noon-day, and in a crowd, adding coward to the epithets?"

"Come — come," said the other, with a sarcastic coolness, that only increased my father's rage. "You know as well as any man, that these things are not done in this fashion. I am easily found when wanted."

"Do you think that I will give you another day to propagate your slander? No, by Heaven! not an hour!" And so saying, he rushed on, probably to consummate the outrage by a blow. Rutledge, who was in full dress, now drew his rapier, and the two steels crossed.

My father was a consummate swordsman; he had fought several times with that weapon when abroad; and had he only been guided by his habitual temper, nothing would have been easier for him than to overcome his antagonist. So ungovernable, however, was his passion now, that he lost almost every advantage his superior skill might have conferred.

As if determined to kill his enemy at any cost, he never stood on his guard, nor parried a single thrust, but rushed wildly at him. Rutledge, whose courage was equal to his coolness, saw all the advantage this gave him; and, after a few passes, succeeded in running his sword through my father's chest, so that the point actually projected on the opposite side. With a sud-

den jerk of his body, my father snapped the weapon in two, and then shortening his own to within about a foot of the point, he ran Rutledge through the heart. One heavy groan followed, and he fell dead upon his face.

My father drew forth the fragment from his own side, and then stooping down, examined the body of his adversary. His recollection of what passed in that terrible moment was horribly distinct ever after. He mentioned to him from whom I myself learned these details, that so diabolical was the hatred that held possession of him, that he sat down in the grass beside the body, and contemplated it with a kind of fiend-like exultation. A light, thin rain began to fall soon after, and my father, moved by some instinctive feeling, threw Rutledge's cloak over the lifeless body, and then withdrew. Although the pain of his own wound was considerable, he soon perceived that no vital part had been injured — indeed, the weapon had passed through the muscles without ever having penetrated the cavity of the chest. He succeeded, by binding his handkerchief around his waist, in stanching the blood; and, although weakened, the terrible excitement of the event seemed to lend him a momentary strength for further exertion.

His first impulse, as he found himself outside the Green, was to deliver himself to the authorities, making a full avowal of all that had occurred. To do this, however, would involve other consequences which he had not the courage to confront. Any narrative of the duel would necessarily require a history of the provocation, and thus a wider publicity to that shame which was now embittering his existence.

Without ultimately deciding what course he should adopt, my father determined to give himself further time for reflection, by at once hastening back to the country ere his presence in the capital was known. He now returned to the hotel, and, asking for his bill, informed the waiter that if any one inquired for Mr. Cuthbert, that he should mention his address at a certain number in Aungier Street. The carman who drove him from the door was directed to drive to the same place, and there dismissed. After this, taking his carpet-bag in his hand, he walked leisurely along towards Ball's Bridge, where already, as the day was breaking, a number of vehicles were assembled on the stand. Affecting a wish to catch the packet for England, he drove hastily to the Pigeon House, but the vessel had already sailed. It was strange enough that he never was able to say actually whether he meditated passing over to England, or simply to conceal the line of his flight. Thus uncertain whither to go, or what to do, a considerable time was passed; and he was on the point of engaging a boat to cross over to Howth, when a sudden thought struck him, that he would drive direct to Fagan's, in Mary's Abbey.

It was about six o'clock of a bright summer's morning, as my father alighted at Fagan's door. "The Grinder" was already up, and busily engaged inspecting the details of his shop, for, however insignificant as a source of gain, some strange instinct seemed to connect his prosperity with the humble occupation of his father and his grandfather, and he appeared to think that the obscure fruit-stall formed a secret link between their worldly successes and his own.

It was with surprise, not altogether devoid of

shame, that he saw my father descend from the jaunting-car, to salute him.

"I've come to take my breakfast with you, Tony," said he gaily, "and determining to be a man of business for once, I'm resolved to catch these calm hours of the morning that you prudent fellows make such good use of!"

Fagan stared with astonishment at this sudden apparition of one from whom he neither expected a visit at such an hour, much less a speech of such meaning. He, however, mumbled out some words of welcome, with a half-intelligible compliment about my father's capacity being fully equal to any exigencies or any demands that might be made upon it.

"So they told me at school, Tony, and so they said in college. They repeated the same thing when I entered Parliament; but, somehow, I have been always a fellow of great promise and no performance, and I am beginning at last to suspect that I shall scarcely live to see this wonderful future that is to reveal me to the world in the plenitude of my powers."

"It will, then, be entirely your own fault, sir," said Fagan, with an earnestness that showed the interest he felt in the subject. "Let me speak to you seriously, sir," said he; and he led the way into a room, where, having seated themselves, he went on, — "With your name, and your position, and your abilities, Mr. Carew — no, sir, I am too deeply concerned in what I say to be a flatterer — there was a great and glorious career open before you, nor is the time to follow it gone by. Think what you might be amongst your countrymen, by standing forward as their champion! Picture to yourself the place you might hold

and the power you might wield. Not a power to depend upon the will of a minister, or the caprice of a cabinet, but a power based upon the affections of an entire people; for I say it advisedly, the leadership of the national party is yet to be claimed. Lord Charlemont is too weak and too ductile for it. Besides that, his aristocratic leanings unfit him for close contact with the masses. Henry Grattan has great requisites, but he has great deficiencies too. The favour that he wins in the senate, he loses in society. We want a man who shall speak for us in public the sentiments that fall from us at our tables; who shall assure the English Government, and the English nation too, that the Irish Catholic is equal in loyalty as in courage — that his fealty is not less because his faith is that of his fathers. It is not eloquence we need, Mr. Carew. Our cause does not want embellishment. Orators may be required to prop up a weak or falling case. Ours can stand alone, without such aid! An honest, a resolute, and an independent advocate — one, whose ancient name on one side, and whose genial nature on the other, shall be a link betwixt the people and the gentry. Such a man, whenever found, may take the lead in Ireland; and, however English ministers may dictate laws, he, and he alone, will govern this country."

My father listened with intense eagerness to every word of this appeal. Not even the flattery to himself was more pleasing than the glimpses he caught of a great national struggle, in which Ireland should come out triumphant. Such visions were amongst the memories of his boyish enthusiasm, begotten in the wild orgies of a college life, and nurtured amidst the excesses of many a debauch; and although foreign

travel and society had obliterated most of these impressions, now they came back with tenfold force, in a moment when his mind was deeply agitated and excited. For an instant he had been carried away by this enticing theme; he had actually forgotten, in his ardour, the terrible incident which so lately he had passed through, when Raper rushed hurriedly into the room where they sat, exclaiming, —

"A dreadful murder has taken place in the city. Mr. Rutledge, of the Viceroy's household, was found dead this morning, in Stephen's Green."

"Within the Green?" asked Fagan. "What could have brought him there after nightfall? There must have been some assignation in the case."

"Do you know — have you heard any of the circumstances, sir?" asked my father.

"No further than that he was killed by a sword-thrust which passed completely through his chest. Some suspect that he was lured to the spot by one pretence or other. Others are of opinion that it was a duel! Robbery had certainly nothing to say to it, for his watch and purse were found on the body."

"Have they taken the body away?"

"No, sir. It remains for the coroner's inquest, which is to assemble immediately."

"Had Rutledge any political enemies? Is it supposed that the event was in any way connected with party?"

"That could scarcely be," said Fagan. "He was one who gave himself little concern about state affairs — an easy fop, that fluttered about the Court, caring for little above the pleasures of his valueless existence!"

"For such men you have few sympathies, Fagan!"

"None, sir. Not one. Their history is ever the same. A life of debauch — a death of violence!"

"This is to speak hardly, Fagan," said my father, mildly. "Men like poor Rutledge have their good qualities, though they be not such as you and I set store by. I never thought so myself, but others, indeed, deemed him a most amusing companion, and with more than an ordinary share of wit and pleasantry."

"The wit and pleasantry were both exerted to make his friends ridiculous, sir," said Fagan, severely. "He was a man that lived upon a reputation for smartness, gained at the expense of every good feeling."

"I'll wager a trifle, Tony," said my father, laugh-"ing, that he died deep in your books. Come, be frank, and say how much this unhappy affair will cost you."

"Not so dearly as it may you, sir," whispered Fagan in my father's ear, and the words nearly overcame him.

"How so? — what do you mean?" muttered my father, in a broken, faltering voice.

"Come this way, for a moment, Mr. Carew," said the other, aloud, "and I'll show you my snuggery, where I live, apart from all the world."

My father followed him into a small chamber, where Fagan at once closed the door, and locked it; and then approaching him, pulled forth from beneath his loose cuff, a lace ruffle, stained and clotted with blood.

"It is fortunate for you, Mr. Carew," said he, "that Raper is so unobservant; any other than he would have seen this, and this;" and as he spoke the last

words, he pointed to a small portion of a bloody handkerchief which projected outside the shirt-frill.

So overwhelmed was my father by these evidences that he sank powerless into a chair, without strength to speak.

"How was it? — how did it occur?" asked Fagan, sitting down in front of him, and placing one hand familiarly on my father's knee. Simple as the action was, it was a liberty that he had never dared before to take with my father, who actually shuddered at the touch, as though it had been a pollution.

"Unpremeditated, of course, I conclude," said Fagan, still endeavouring to lead him on to some explanation. My father nodded.

"Unwitnessed also," said Fagan, slowly. Another nod implied assent.

"Who knows of your presence in Dublin? — Who has seen you, since your arrival in Dublin?" asked he.

"None of my acquaintances, so far, at least, as I know. I went, by a mere accident, to an hotel where I am not known. By another accident, if I dare so call it, I fell upon this rencontre. I will endeavour to tell you the whole, as it occurred — that is, if I can sufficiently collect myself; but first let me have some wine, Fagan, for I am growing weak."

As Fagan left the room, he passed the desk where Raper was already seated, hard at work, and laying his hand on the clerk's shoulder, he whispered, —

"Be cautious that you do not mention Mr. Carew's arrival here. There is a writ out against him for debt, and he has come up here to be out of the way."

Raper heard the words without even discontinuing

to write, and merely muttered a brief "Very well," in reply.

When Fagan re-entered the chamber, he found my father just rallying from a fainting-fit, which loss of blood and agitation together had brought on. Two or three glasses of wine, hastily swallowed, restored him, and he was again able to converse.

"Can you be traced to this house? — is there any clue to you here?" asked Fagan, resuming his former seat.

"None, so far as I know. The affair occurred thus —"

"Pardon my interrupting you," broke in Fagan; "but the most important thing at this moment is, to provide for your safety, in the event of any search after you. Have you any ground to apprehend this?"

"None whatever. You shall hear the story."

"They are talking of it outside!" whispered Fagan, with a gesture of his hand to enforce caution; "let us listen to them." And he slowly unlocked the door, and left it to stand ajar.

The outer shop was by this time filling with the small fruit-venders of the capital — a class peculiarly disposed to collect and propagate the gossip of the day; and Fagan well knew how much the popular impression would depend upon the colouring of their recital.

"'Tis lucky," said one, "that his watch and money was on him, or they'd say at once it was the boys done it."

"Faix! they couldn't do that," broke in another; "there's marks about the place would soon contradict them."

"What marks?"

"The print of an elegant boot. I saw it myself; it

is small in the heel and sharp in the toe, very unlike yours or mine, Tim."

"Begad! so much the better," said the other, laughing.

"And I'll tell you more," resumed the former speaker: "it was a dress sword — what they wear at the Castle — killed him. You could scarce see the hole. It's only a little blue spot between the ribs."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" exclaimed a woman's voice; "and they say he was an elegant, fine man!"

"As fine a figure of a man as ever ye looked at!"

"And nobody knows the reason of it at all?" asked she again.

"I'll engage it was about a woman!" muttered a husky, old, cracked voice, that was constantly heard, up to this moment, bargaining for oranges.

And Fagan quickly made a sign to my father to listen attentively.

"That's Denny Cassin," whispered he, "the greatest newsmonger in Dublin."

"The devil recave the fight ever I heerd of hadn't a woman in it, somehow or other; an' if she didn't begin it, she was sure to come in at the end, and make it worse. Wasn't it a woman that got Hemphill Daly shot? — wasn't it a woman was the death of Major Brown, of Coolmines? — wasn't it a woman —"

"Arrah! bother ye, Denny!" broke in the representative of the sex, who stood an impatient listener to this long indictment; "what's worth fightin' for in the world barrin' ourselves?"

A scornful laugh was all the reply he deigned to this appeal; and he went on, —

"I often said what Barry Rutledge 'ud come to; ay, and I told himself so. 'You've a bad tongue,' says

I, 'and you've a bad heart. Some day or other you'll be found out;' and ye see, so he was."

"I wonder who did it!" exclaimed another.

"My wonder is," resumed Denny, "that it wasn't done long ago; or instead of one wound in his skin, that he hadn't fifty. Do you know that when I used to go up to the officers' room with oranges, I'd hear more wickedness out of his mouth in one mornin', than I'd hear in Pill-lane, here, in a month of Sundays. There wasn't a man dined at the Castle — there wasn't a lady danced at the Coort, that he hadn't a bad story about; and he always began by saying — 'He and I were old school-fellows,' or 'she's a great friend of mine.' I was up there the morning after the Coort came home from Carew Castle; and if ye heard the way he went on about the company. He began with Curtis, and finished with Carew himself."

Fagan closed the door here, and walking over, sat down beside my father's chair.

"We've heard enough now, sir," said he, "to know what popular opinion will pronounce upon this man. Denny speaks with the voice of a large mass of this city; and if they be not either very intelligent or exalted, they are, at least, fellows who back words by deeds, and are quite ready to risk their heads for their convictions — a test of honesty that their betters, perhaps, would shrink from. From what he says, there will be little sympathy for Rutledge. The law, of course, will follow its due path; but the law against popular feeling is like the effort of the wind to resist the current of a fast river. It may ruffle the surface, but never will arrest the stream. Now, sir, just tell me in a few words, what took place between you?"

My father detailed everything, from the hour of his arrival in Dublin, down to the very moment of his descending at Fagan's door. He faltered, indeed, and hesitated about the conversation of the coffee-room, for even in all the confidence of a confession, he shrunk from revealing the story of his marriage. And in doing so, he stammered and blundered so much, that Fagan could collect little above the bare facts, that my mother had been wagered at a card-table, and won by my father.

Had my father been in a cooler mood, he could not have failed to remark how much deeper was the interest Fagan took in the story of his first meeting with my mother, than in all the circumstances of the duel. So far as it was safe — further than it would have been so at any other moment — the Grinder cross-questioned my father as to her birth, the manner of her education, and the position she held before her marriage.

"This is all beside the matter," cried my father, at last, impatiently. "I am now to think what is best to be done here. Shall I give myself up at once? — and why not, Fagan?" added he, abruptly, interrogating the look of the other.

"For two sufficient reasons, sir: first, that you would be needlessly exposing yourself to great peril; and, secondly, you would certainly be exposing another to great ——." He stopped and faltered, for there was that in my father's face that made the utterance of a wrong word dangerous.

"Take care what you say, Master Tony; for, however selfish you may deem me, I have still enough of

heart left to consider those far worthier of thought than myself."

"And yet, sir, the fact is so, whether I speak it or not," said Fagan. "Once let this affair come before a public tribunal, and what is there that can be held back from the prying impertinence of the world? And I see no more reason why you should peril life than risk all that makes life desirable."

"But what or where is all this peril, Fagan? You talk as if I had been committing a murder."

"It is precisely the name they would give it in the indictment, sir," said the other, boldly. "Nay, hear me out, Mr. Carew. Were I to tell the adventure of last night, as the bare facts reveal it, who would suggest the possibility of its being a duel? Think of the place — the hour — the solitude — the mere accident of the meeting! Oh! no, sir; duels are not fought in this fashion."

"You are arguing against yourself, Tony. You have convinced me that there is but one course open. I must surrender myself!"

"Think well of it, first, Mr. Carew," said Fagan, drawing his chair closer, and speaking in a lower tone. "We must not let any false delicacy deceive us. There never was a case of this kind yet that did not less depend upon its own merits than on fifty things over which one has no control. The temper of the judge — the rank in life of the jury — the accidental tone of public opinion at the moment — the bias of the press; these are the agencies to be thought of. When Grogan Hamilton was tried for shooting John Adair in the mess-room at Carlow, his verdict was pronounced before the jury was empannelled!"

"I never heard of that case," said my father, anxiously.

"It occurred when you were a boy at school, sir; and although the facts would not read so condemnatory now, at that time there was not one voice to be heard on the side of mercy. The duel, if duel it could be called, took place after every one, save themselves, had left the table. The quarrel was an old grudge revived over the bottle. They fought without witnesses; and with Heaven knows what inequality of weapons, and although Hamilton gave himself up ——"

"He gave himself up?" interrupted my father.

"Yes, sir — in direct opposition to his friends' advice, he did so; but, had he followed a different course — had he even waited till the excitement had calmed down a little — till men began to talk more dispassionately on the subject, the result might have been different."

"And what was the result?"

"I have already told you, sir — a conviction."

"And what followed?"

"He was hanged — hanged in front of the old gaol at Naas, where the regiment he once had served in was quartered. I don't know how or why this was done. Some said it was to show the people that there was no favouritism towards a man of rank and fortune. Some alleged it was to spare the feelings of his relatives, who were Carlow people."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed my father, passionately, "was there ever such an infamy!"

"The event happened as I tell you, sir. I believe I have the trial in the house — if I have not, Crowther will have it, for he was engaged in the defence, and

one of those who endeavoured to dissuade Hamilton from his resolution of surrender."

"And who is Crowther?"

"A solicitor, sir, of great practice and experience."

"In whom you have confidence, Fagan?"

"The most implicit confidence."

"And who could be useful to us in this affair?"

"Of the very greatest utility, sir; not alone from his legal knowledge, but from his consummate acquaintance with the world and its modes of thinking."

"Can you send for him? Can you get him here without exciting suspicion?" said my father; for already had terror seized hold on him, and even before he knew it, was he entangled in the toils.

"I can have him here within an hour, sir, and without any risk whatever, for he is my own law adviser, and in constant intercourse with me."

Fagan now persuaded my father to lie down, and try to obtain some sleep, promising to awake him the moment that Crowther arrived.

CHAPTER XIV.

A Conference.

Scarcely had my father laid himself down on the bed, when he fell off into a heavy sleep. Fatigue, exhaustion, and loss of blood, all combined to overcome him, and he lay motionless in the same attitude he at first assumed.

Fagan came repeatedly to the bed-side, and opening the curtains slightly, gazed on the cold, impassive features with a strange intensity. One might have supposed that the almost deathlike calm of the sleeper's

face would have defied every thought or effort of speculation; but there he sat, watching it as though, by dint of patience and study, he might at length attain to reading what was passing within that brain.

At the slightest sound that issued from the lips, too, he would bend down to try and catch its meaning. Perhaps, at moments like these, a trace of impatience might be detected in his manner; but for the most part, his hard, stern features showed no sign of emotion, and it was in all his accustomed self-possession that he descended to the small and secluded chamber, where Crowther sat awaiting him.

"Still asleep, Fagan?" asked the lawyer, looking hastily up from the papers and documents he had been perusing.

"He is asleep; and like enough to continue so," replied the other, slowly, while he sank down into an arm-chair, and gave himself up to deep reflection.

"I have been thinking a good deal over what you have told me," said Crowther, "and I own I see the very gravest objections to his surrendering himself.

"My own opinion!" rejoined Fagan, curtly.

"Even if it were an ordinary duel, with all the accustomed formalities of time, place, and witnesses, the temper of the public mind is just now in a critical state on these topics — MacNamara's death, and that unfortunate affair at Kells, have made a deep impression. I'd not trust too much to such dispositions. Besides, the chances are, they would not admit him to bail, so that he'd have to pass three, nearly four, months in Newgate before he could be brought to trial."

"He'd not live through the imprisonment. It would break his heart, if it did not kill him otherwise."

"By no means unlikely."

"I know him well, and I am convinced he'd not survive it. Why, the very thought of the accusation — the bare idea that he could be arraigned as a criminal, so over-came him here this morning, that he staggered back, and sunk into that chair, half fainting."

"He thinks that he was not known at that hotel where he stopped?"

"He is quite confident of that — the manner of the waiters towards him convinces him that he was not recognised."

"Nor has he spoken with any one since his arrival, except yourself?"

"Not one, save the hackney carman, who evidently did not know him."

"He left home, you say, without a servant?"

"Yes! he merely said that he was going over, for a day or two, to the mines, and would be back by the end of the week. But, latterly, he has often absented himself in this fashion; and, having spoken of visiting one place, has changed his mind and gone to another, in an opposite direction."

"Who has seen him since he arrived here?"

"No one but myself and Raper."

"Ah! Raper has seen him?"

"That matters but little. Joe has forgotten all about it already, or if he has not, I have but to say, that it was a mistake for him to fancy that it was so. You shall see, if you like, that he will not even hesitate the moment I tell him the thing is so."

"It only remains, then, to determine where he

should go — I mean Carew; for, although any locality would serve in one respect, we must bethink ourselves of every issue to this affair; and, should there be any suspicion attaching to him, he ought to be out of danger — the danger of arrest. Where do his principal estates lie?"

"In Wicklow — immediately around Castle Carew."

"But he has other property?"

"Yes! he has some northern estates; and there is a mine, also, on Lough Allen belonging to him."

"Well, why not go there?"

"There is no residence; there is nothing beyond the cabins of the peasantry, or the scarcely more comfortable dwelling of the overseer. I have it, Crowther," cried he, suddenly, as though a happy notion had just struck him; "I have it. You have heard of that shooting-lodge of mine at the Killeries? It was Carew's property, but has fallen into my hands: he shall go there. So far as seclusion goes, I defy Ireland to find its equal. They who have seen it, tell me it is a perfect picture of landscape beauty. He can shoot, and fish, and sketch for a week or so, till we see what turn this affair is like to take. Nothing could be better; the only difficulty is the distance."

"You tell me that he is ill."

"It is more agitation than actual illness: he was weak and feeble before this happened, and of course his nerves are terribly shaken by it."

"The next consideration is, how to apprise his wife, at least, what we ought to tell her if he be incapable of writing."

"I hinted that already as I accompanied him up stairs, and by his manner it struck me that he did not lay much stress on the matter; he merely said, 'Oh!

she has no curiosity; she never worries herself about what does not concern her.'"

"A rare quality in a wife, Fagan," said the other, with a smile.

Whether it was the prompting of his own thoughts, or that some real or fancied emphasis on the word "wife!" caught him, but Fagan asked, suddenly, "What did you say?"

"I remarked that it was a rare quality for a wife to possess. You thought, perhaps, it was rather the gift of those who enjoy the privilege, and not the name of such."

"Maybe you're right, then, Crowther. Shall I own to you, it was the very thought that was passing through my own brain."

"How strange that Rutledge should have hinted the very same suspicion to myself, the last time we ever spoke together," said Crowther, in a low, confidential whisper. "We were sitting in my back office, he had come to show me some bills of money won at play, and ask my advice about them. Carew was the endorser of two or three amongst them, and Rutledge remarked at the tremendous pace the other was going, and how impossible it was that any fortune could long maintain it. There was some difficulty in catching exactly his meaning, for he spoke rapidly, and with more than his accustomed warmth. It was something, however, to this effect — 'All this extravagant display is Madame's doing, and the natural consequence of his folly in France. If, instead of this absurd mistake, he had married and settled in Ireland, his whole career would have taken a different turn.' Now, when I reflected on the words after he left me, I could not satisfy

myself whether he had said that Carew ought to have married, in contradistinction to have formed this French attachment, or simply that he deemed an Irish wife would have been a wiser choice than a French one."

"The former strikes me as the true interpretation," said Fagan, "and the more I think on every circumstance of this affair, the more do I incline to this opinion. The secrecy so unnecessary — the mystery as to her family, even as to her name, all so needless. That interval of seclusion, in which, probably, he had not yet resolved finally on the course he should adopt. And lastly, a point more peculiarly referring to ourselves, and over which I have often pondered — I mean the selection of my daughter, Polly, to be her friend and companion. It is not at my time of life," added Fagan, with an almost fierce energy of voice, "that I have to learn how the aristocracy regard me and such as me. No one needs to tell me that any intercourse between us must depend on something else than similarity of taste and pursuit; that if we ever sit down to the same table together, it is on the ground of a compromise. There is a shame to be concealed or consoled, or there is a debt to be deferred, or left unclaimed for ever. Walter Carew's wife would scarcely have sought out the Grinder's daughter for her friend and bosom companion. His mistress might have thought such an alliance most suitable. Polly has herself told me the terms of perfect equality on which they lived; that never by a chance word, look, or gesture, was there aught which could imply a position of superiority above her own. They called each other by their Christian names, they assumed all the intimacy of sisters, and that almost at once. When she related these things to

me," cried Fagan, sternly, "my passion nearly overcame me, to think how we had been outraged and insulted; but I remembered, suddenly, that there were others, far higher than us, exposed to the same indignity. The Castle was crowded by the rank, the wealth, and the influence of the whole country; and if there be a disgrace to be endured, we have, at least, partners in our shame."

"Yes, yes," said Crowther, nodding his head slowly in assent; "the whole assumes a strange and most remarkable consistency. I remember well, hearing how many of those invited on that occasion had sent letters of apology; and stranger again, the way in which the party broke up and separated has been made public enough in the newspapers. Rutledge's own words were — 'It was a rout, not a retreat.' That was a curious expression."

Who has not, at some time or other of his life, experienced the force of that casuistry which is begotten of suspicion? Who has not felt how completely reason is mastered by the subtle assaults of a wily ingenuity, which whilst combining the false and the true, the possible and impossible together, makes out a mock array of evidence almost too strong for a doubt? The least creative of minds are endowed with this faculty, and even the most common-place and matter-of-fact temperaments are sometimes the slaves of this delusion! To render its influence all-powerful, however, it should be exercised by two, who, in the interchange of suspicions, and by bartering their inferences, arrive at a degree of certainty in their conclusions, rarely accorded to the most convincing testimony. As a river is swollen by the aid of every tiny rill that trickles down the

mountain side, so does the current of conviction receive as tributary, incidents the most trivial, and events of the slightest meaning.

Fagan's spirit revolted at what he felt to be a gross insult passed upon his daughter, but this very indignation served to rivet more firmly his suspicions, for he reasoned thus: — Men are ever ready to credit what they desire to be credible, and to disbelieve that which it is unpleasant to accept as true. Now, here have I every temptation to incredulity! If this be the fact, as my suspicions indicate, I have been deeply outraged. An affront has been offered to me, which dared not have been put upon one of higher rank and better blood. It is, therefore, my interest and my wish to suppose this impossible, and yet I cannot do so. Not all the self-respect I can call to aid, not all the desire to shelter myself behind a doubt, will suffice. My reason accepts what my feelings would reject, and I believe what it is a humiliation for me to credit.

Such was, in brief, the substance of a long mental struggle and self-examination on Fagan's part — a process to which he addressed himself with all the shrewdness of his nature. It was a matter of deep moment to him in every way. He ardently desired that he should arrive at a right judgment upon it, and yet with all his penetration and keen-sightedness, he never perceived that another agency was at work all the while, whose tendencies were exactly in the opposite direction. To believe Walter Carew still unmarried, was to revive his long extinct hope of calling him his son-in-law, and to bring back once more that gorgeous dream of Polly's elevation to rank and position, which had filled his mind for many a year. His whole heart

had been set upon this object. In pursuit of it, he had made the most immense advances of money to my father, many of them on inferior security. For some he had the mere acknowledgment contained in a few lines of a common letter. The measures of severity which he had once menaced were undertaken in the very paroxysm of his first disappointment, and were as speedily relinquished when calm reflection showed him that they could avail nothing against the past. Besides this, he felt that there was still an object, to the attainment of which my father's aid might contribute much, and towards which he hoped to urge him — the emancipation of the Catholics. It had been long Fagan's cherished idea, that the leadership of that party should be given to one who united to reasonable good abilities the advantages of birth, large fortune, and, above all, personal courage.

"We have orators and writers in abundance," would he say. "There are plenty who can make speeches, and even songs for us; but we want a few men, who, with a large stake in the country, and high position in society, are willing and ready to peril both, and themselves into the bargain, in the assertion of our cause. If we ever chance to find these, our success is certain. The worst thing about our cause," added he, "is not its disloyalty, for that admits of discussion and denial; but the real plague-spot is its vulgarity. Our enemies have been cunning enough to cast over the great struggle of a nation, all the petty and miserable characteristics of a faction, and not of mere faction, but of one agitated by the lowest motives, and led on by the meanest advocates. A gentleman or two, to take service with us, will at once repulse this tactic; and

until we can hit upon these, we shall make no progress."

I have been obliged to dwell even to tediousness on these traits of the Grinder; for if they be not borne in mind, his actions and motives will seem destitute of any satisfactory explanation. And I now return to the chamber where he sat with Crowther, as they compared impressions together, and bartered suspicions about my father's marriage.

"Now that I begin to consider the matter in this light," said Crowther, "it is curious what an explanation it affords to many things that used to puzzle me formerly. All that coldness and reserve towards Carew that his neighbours showed — the way his former acquaintances fell off from him, one by one — and, lastly, those strange hints about him in the newspapers. I suppose we should see the meaning of every one of them now easily enough?"

Fagan made no reply; his mind was travelling along over the road it had entered upon, and would not be turned away by any call whatsoever.

"Yes," muttered he to himself, "the little cottage at Fallrach, in the Killeries — that's the place! and the only thing now is to get him down there. I must go up and see how he gets on, Crowther. I'm half afraid that he ought to see a surgeon." And so saying, he arose and left the room.

My father was still sleeping as he entered, but less tranquilly than before, with a feverish flush upon his face, and his lips dry and dark-coloured.

With a noiseless hand, Fagan drew back the curtain; and, seating himself close to the bed, bent down to gaze on him. The uneasy motions of the sleeper

denoted pain; and more than once his hand was pressed against his side, as if it was the seat of some suffering. Fagan watched every gesture eagerly, and tried, but in vain, to collect some meaning from the low and broken utterance. Rapidly speaking at intervals, and at times moaning painfully, he appeared to labour either under some mental or bodily agony, in a paroxysm of which, at last, he burst open his vest, and clutched his embroidered shirt-frill, with a violence that tore it in fragments.

As he did so, Fagan caught sight of a handkerchief, stained with blood, which, with cautious gesture, he slowly removed, and, walking to the window, examined it carefully. This done, he folded it up; and, enveloping it in his own, placed it in his pocket. Once more he took his place at the bed-side, and seemed to listen with intense anxiety for every sound of the sleeper's lips. The fever appeared to gain ground, for the flush now covered the face and forehead, and the limbs were twitched with short convulsive motions.

At last, as the paroxysm had reached its height, he bounded up from the bed, and awoke.

"Where am I?" cried he, wildly, "Who are all these? What do they allege against me?"

"Lie down; compose yourself, Mr. Carew. You are amongst friends, who wish you well, and will treat you kindly," said Fagan, mildly.

"But it was not of my seeking — no one can dare to say so. Fagan will be my back to any amount — ten thousand, if they ask it."

"That will I — to the last penny I possess."

"There, I told you so. I often said I knew the

Grinder better than any of you. You laughed at me for it; but I was right, for all that."

"I trust you were right, sir," said Fagan, calmly.

"What I said was this," continued he, eagerly: "the father of such a girl as Polly must be a gentleman at heart. He may trip and stumble, in his imitations of your modish paces; but the soul of a gentleman must be in him. Was I right there, or not?"

"Pray, calm yourself; lie down, and take your rest," said Fagan, gently pushing him back upon the pillow.

"You are quite right," said he; "there is nothing for it now but submission. MacNaghten, Harvey, Burton — all who have known me from boyhood — can testify if I were one to do a dishonourable action. I tell you again and again, I will explain nothing; life is not worth such a price — such ignominy is too great!"

He paused, as if the thought was too painful to pursue; and then, fixing his eyes on Fagan, he laughed aloud, and added, —

"Eh, Fagan! that would be like one of your own contracts — a hundred per cent.!"

"I have not treated you in this wise, Mr. Carew," said he, calmly.

"No, my boy! that you have not. To the last hour of my life — no great stretch of time, perhaps — I'll say the same. You have been a generous fellow with me — the devil and yourself may, perhaps, know why. I do not — nay, more, Fagan — I never cared to know. Perhaps you thought I'd marry Polly. By George! I might have done worse; and who knows

what may be yet on the cards? Ay, just so — the cards — the cards!"

He did not speak again for several minutes; but when he did, his voice assumed a tone of greater distinctness and accuracy, as if he would not that a single word were lost.

"I knew your scheme about the Papists, Tony. I guessed what you were at then. I was to have emancipated you!"

A wild laugh broke from him, and he went on, —

"Just fancy the old trumpeter's face, that hangs up in the dinner-room at Castle Carew! Imagine the look he would bestow on his descendant as I sat down to table. Faith, Old Noll himself would have jumped out of the canvas at the tidings. If you cannot strain your fancy that far, Tony, think what your own father would have said were his degenerate son to be satisfied with lawful interest! — imagine him sorrowing over the lost precepts of his house!"

"There; I'll close the curtains, and leave you to take a sleep," said Fagan.

"But I have no time for this, man," cried the other, again starting up; "I must be up and away. You must find some place of concealment for me till I can reach the Continent. Understand me well, Fagan. I cannot, I will not, make a defence; as little am I disposed to die like a felon! There's the whole of it! Happily, if the worst should come, Tony, the disgrace dies with me; that's something — eh?"

"You will make yourself far worse by giving way to this excitement, Mr. Carew; you must try and compose yourself."

"So I will, Fagan. I'll be as obedient as you wish.

Only tell me that you will watch for my safety, assure me of that, and I'm content."

As though the very words he had just uttered had brought a soothing influence to his mind, he had scarcely finished speaking, when he fell off into a deep sleep, unbroken by even a dream. Fagan stood long enough at the bed-side to assure himself that all was quiet, and then left the room, locking the door as he passed out, and taking the key with him.

CHAPTER XV.

Circumstantial Evidence.

In these memoirs of my father, I have either derived my information from the verbal accounts of his friends and contemporaries, or taken it from his own letters and papers. Many things have I omitted, as irrelevant to his story, which, in themselves, might not have been devoid of interest; and of some others, the meaning and purport being somewhat obscure, I have abstained from all mention. I make this apology for the incompleteness of my narrative; and the reader will probably accept my excuses the more willingly, since he is spared the infliction of my discursiveness on topics only secondary and adventitious.

I now, however, come to a period the most eventful of his story, but, by an unhappy accident, the least illustrated by any record of its acts. MacNaghten, my chief source of information hitherto, is here unable to guide or direct me. He knew nothing of my father's movements, nor did he hold any direct intercourse with him. Whatever letters may have been written by my

father himself, I am unable to tell — none of them having ever reached me. My difficulty is therefore considerable, having little to guide me beyond chance paragraphs in some of Fagan's letters to his daughter, and some two or three formal communications on business matters to my mother.

There is yet enough even in these scattered notices to show, that Fagan's hopes of realising the great ambition of his life had been suddenly and unexpectedly renewed. Not alone was he inclined to believe that my father might become the political leader of his own peculiar party, and take upon him the unclaimed position of an Irish champion, but further still, he persuaded himself that my father was not really married, and that the present conjuncture offered a favourable prospect of making him his son-in-law.

The reader has already seen from what a slight foundation this edifice sprung — a random word spoken by my father at a moment of great excitement — a half-muttered regret, wrung from him in a paroxysm of wounded self-love.

He was not the first, nor will he be the last, who shall raise up a structure for which the will alone supplies material; mayhap, too, in his case, the fire of hope had never been totally extinguished in his heart; and from its smouldering embers now burst out this new and brilliant flame.

It was about an hour after midnight, that a chaise, with four horses, drew up at Fagan's door; and, after a brief delay, a sick man was assisted carefully down the stairs, and deposited within the carriage. Raper took his place beside him, and, with a speed that denoted urgency, the equipage drove away, and, passing

through many a narrow lane and alley, emerged from the city at last, and took the great western road.

Fallrach, even in our own day of universal travel and research, is a wild and lonely spot; but at the time I refer to, it was as utterly removed from all intercourse with the world, as some distant settlement of central America. Situated in a little bend or bight of coast, where the Killeries opens to the great ocean, backed by lofty mountains, and flanked either by the sea, or the still less accessible crags of granite, this little cottage was almost concealed from view. Unpretending as it was without, its internal arrangements included every comfort; and my father found himself not only surrounded with all the appliances of ease and enjoyment, but in the very midst of objects well known and dear to him from old associations. It had been in our family for about a century; but up to this moment my father had never seen it, nor was he aware of the singular beauty of the neighbouring coast scenery.

At first, he could do no more than sit at an open window that looked over the sea, enjoying, with dreamy languor, the calm influences of a solitude so thoroughly unbroken. To an overwrought and excited mind, this interval of quiet was a priceless luxury; and far from experiencing weariness in his lonely life, the days glided past unnoticed.

Raper was not of a nature to obtrude himself on any one; and as my father neither sought nor needed a companion, they continued to live beneath the same roof almost without meeting. While, therefore, there was the most scrupulous attention to all my father's wants, and a watchfulness that seemed even to anti-

cipate a wish on his part, his privacy was never invaded nor disturbed. A few words each morning between Raper and himself provided for all the arrangements of the day, and there ended their intercourse.

Leaving him, therefore, in the indulgence of this placid existence, I must now turn to another scene, where very different actors and interests were engaged.

The death of Barry Rutledge had created the most intense excitement, not alone in Dublin, but throughout the country generally. He was almost universally known. His acquaintanceship embraced men of every shade of opinion, and of all parties; and if his character did not suggest any feelings of strong attachment or regard, there were social qualities about him which, at least, attracted admiration, and made him welcome in society.

Such men are often regretted by the world more deeply than is their due. Their amusing faculties are frequently traced back to some imaginary excellence in their natures, and there mingles with the sorrow for their loss a sort of tender compassion for the fate of abilities misapplied, and high gifts wasted. This was exactly the case here. Many who did not rank amongst his intimates while he lived, now affected to deplore his death most deeply; and there was a degree of sympathy felt, or assumed to be felt, for his fate, widely disproportioned to his claims upon real regard.

The manner of his death still remained a profound mystery. The verdict of the coroner's jury was simply to the effect, that "he had died of wounds, inflicted by a person or persons unknown," but without an attempt at explanation. The witnesses examined deposed to

very little more than the state in which the body was found, and the prints of footsteps discovered in its vicinity. These, indeed, and other marks about the spot, seemed to indicate that a struggle had taken place; but a strange and unaccountable apathy prevailed as to all investigation, and the public was left to the very vaguest of speculations, as they appeared from time to time in the columns of the newspapers.

Amongst those who accompanied Rutledge into the street, there was a singular discrepancy of opinion, some averring that they heard him called on by his name, and others equally positive in asserting that the provocation was uttered in the only emphatic monosyllable, "a lie." They were all men of standing and position in the world; they were persons of indisputable honour; and yet, strange to say, upon a simple matter of fact, which had occupied but a few seconds, they could not be brought to anything like agreement. The most positive of all in maintaining his opinion was a Colonel Vereker, who persisted in alleging that he stood side by side with Rutledge the whole time he was speaking — that he could swear not only to the words used by the unknown speaker, but that he would go so far as to say, that such was the impression made upon his senses, that he could detect the voice were he ever to hear it again.

This assertion, at first uttered in the small circle of intimacy, at last grew to be talked of abroad, and many were of opinion it would one day or other give the clue to this mysterious affair. As to Vereker himself, he felt that he was to a certain extent pledged to the proof of what he had maintained so persistently. His opinions had gained currency, and were discussed

by the press, which, in the dearth of other topics of interest, devoted a large portion of their columns to commentary on this event.

Any one now looking back to the pages of the Dublin "Express" or "Falkner" of that date, will scarcely fail to find that each day contributed some new and ingenious suggestion as to the manner of Rutledge's death. Some of these were arrayed with great details, and the most minute arrangement of circumstances; others were constructed of materials the least probable and likely. Every view had, however, its peculiar advocates; and it was curious to see to what violence was carried the war of controversy upon the subject.

By the publicity which accompanies such events as these, the ends of justice are mainly sustained and aided. Discussion suggests inquiry, and, by degrees, the general mind is turned with zeal to an investigation, which, under ordinary circumstances, had only occupied the attention of the authorities.

To any one who has not witnessed a similar movement of popular anxiety, it would be difficult to believe how completely this topic engrossed the thoughts of the capital; and through every grade of society the same intense desire prevailed to unravel this mystery. Amongst the many facts adduced, was one which attracted a large share of speculation, and this was the track of footsteps from the very opposite corner of the "Green" to the fatal spot, and their issue at the little wicket gate, of which we have already spoken. These traces were made by a large foot, and were unmistakably those of a heavy man, wearing boots such as were usually worn by gentlemen. One peculiarity

of them, too, was, that the heels were studded with large nails, rarely worn save by the peasantry. A shoemaker who served on the inquest was heard to remark, that a very few country gentlemen still persisted in having their boots thus provided, and that he himself had only one such customer, for whom he had just finished a new pair that were then ready to be sent home.

The remark attracted attention, and led to an examination of the boots, which, strange to say, were found exactly to correspond with the tracks in the clay. This fact, coupled with another, that the person for whom they were made, and who had been impatient to obtain them, had not even called at the shop, or made any inquiry, since the night of Rutledge's death, was of so suspicious a nature, that the boots were taken possession of by the authorities, and the maker strictly enjoined to the most guarded secrecy as to the name of him by whom they were ordered.

With every precaution to secure secrecy, the story of the boots got noised about, and letters poured forth in print to show that the custom of wearing such heels as was described was by no means so limited as was at first assumed. In the very thick of discussion on this subject, there came a post letter one evening to the bootmaker's house, requesting him to send the boots lately ordered by an old customer, J. C., to the "Blue Balls," at Clontarf, addressed, "George J. Grogan, Esq."

The shopkeeper, on receiving this epistle, immediately communicated it to the authorities, who could not fail to see in it another circumstance of deep suspicion. From the first moment of having learned

his name, they had prosecuted the most active inquiries, and learned that he had actually been in town the evening of Rutledge's death, and suddenly taken his departure on the morning after. The entire of the preceding evening, too, he had been absent from his hotel, to which he returned late at night, and, instead of retiring to bed, immediately occupied himself with preparations for his departure.

As the individual was one well known, and occupying a prominent position in society, it was deemed to be a step requiring the very gravest deliberation in what manner to proceed. His political opinions, and even his personal conduct, being strongly opposed to the Government, rather increased than diminished this difficulty, since the Liberal papers would be sure to lay hold of any proceedings as a gross insult to the national party.

The advice of the law officers, however, overruled all these objections; a number of circumstances appeared to concur to inculpate him, and it was decided on issuing a warrant for his arrest at the place which he had named as his address.

Secrecy was now no longer practicable; and to the astonishment of all Dublin was it announced in the morning papers, that Mr. Curtis was arrested the preceding night on a judge's warrant, charged with the murder of Barry Rutledge.

Terrible as such an accusation must always sound, there is something doubly appalling when uttered against one whose rank in society would seem to exempt him from the temptations of such guilt. The natural revulsion to credit a like imputation is, of course, considerable; but, notwithstanding this, there

were circumstances in Curtis's character and habits that went far to render the allegation not devoid of probability. He was a rash, impetuous, and revengeful man, always involved in pecuniary difficulties, and rarely exempt from some personal altercation. Harassed by law, disappointed, and, as he himself thought, persecuted by the Government, his life was a continual conflict. Though not without those who recognised in him traits of warm-hearted and generous devotion, the number of these diminished as he grew older, and, by the casualties of the world, he lived to fancy himself the last of a by-gone generation, far superior in every gift and attribute to that which succeeded it.

When arrested, and charged with the crime of wilful murder, so far from experiencing the indignant astonishment such an allegation might naturally lead to, he only accepted it as another instance of the unrelenting hate with which the Government, or, as he styled it, "the Castle," had, through his life long, pursued him.

"Who is it," cried he, with sarcastic bitterness, "that I have murdered?"

"You are charged with being accessory to the death of Mr. Barry Rutledge, sir," said the other.

"Barry Rutledge! — the Court jester, the Castle mimic, the Tale-bearer of the Viceroy's household, the Hireling scoffer at honest men, and the cringing supplicant of bad ones. The man who crushed such a reptile would have deserved well of his country, if it were not that the breed is too large to be extirpated."

"Take care what you say, Mr. Curtis," said the

other, respectfully; "your words may be used to your disadvantage."

"Take care what I say! Who are you speaking to, sirrah? Is the caution given to Joe Curtis? Is it to the man that has braved your power, and laughed at your Acts of Parliament, these fifty years? Are you going to teach me discretion now? Hark ye, my man, tell your employers not to puzzle their head with plóts and schemes about a conviction; they need neither bribe a witness, corrupt a judge, nor pack a jury. Familiar as such good actions are to them, their task will still be easier here. Tell them this; and tell them also, that the score they must one day be prepared to settle would be lighter if Joe Curtis was the last man they had sent innocently to the scaffold."

As though he had disburthened his mind by this bitter speech, Curtis never again adverted to the dreadful accusation against him. He was committed to Newgate, and while treated with a certain deference to his position in life, he never relaxed in the stern and unbending resolve neither to accept any favour, nor even avail himself of the ordinary means of legal defence.

"Prison diet and a straw mattress!" cried he, "such you cannot deny me; and they will be the extent of the favours I'll receive at your hands."

As the day fixed for the trial approached, the popular excitement rose to a high degree. Curtis was not a favourite even with his own party; his temper was sour, and his disposition unconciliatory; so that even by the liberal press, his name was mentioned with little sympathy or regard. Besides this feeling, there was another, and a far more dangerous one, then

abroad. The lower classes had been of late reflected on severely for the crimes which disgraced the county calendars, and the opportunity of retaliating against the gentry, by a case which involved one of their order, was not to be neglected. While, therefore, the daily papers accumulated a variety of strange and seemingly convincing circumstances, the street literature did not scruple to go further, and Curtis was the theme of many a ballad, wherein his guilt was depicted in all the glowing colours of verse.

It is one of the gravest inconveniences which accompany the liberty of free discussion, that an accused man is put upon his trial before the bar of public opinion, and his guilt or innocence pronounced upon, long before he takes his place in presence of his real judges; and although, in the main, popular opinion is rarely wrong, still there are moments of rash enthusiasm, periods of misguided zeal, or unbridled bigotry, in which such decisions are highly perilous. Too frequently, also, will circumstances quite foreign to the matter at issue be found to influence the opinions expressed upon it.

So far had the popular verdict gone against the accused in the present case, that there was a considerable time spent on the morning of the trial, before a jury could be empannelled which should not include any one who had already pronounced strongly on the case.

Curtis, as I have mentioned, declined all means of defence: he thought, or affected to think, that every member of the bar was open to Government corruption, and that as the whole was an organised plot for his destruction, resistance was perfectly vain and useless.

When asked, therefore, to whom he had entrusted his case, he advanced to the front of the dock, and said — "Gentlemen of the jury, the disagreeable duties you are sworn to discharge shall not be protracted by anything on my part. Whatever falsehoods the counsel for the Crown may advance, and the witnesses swear to, shall meet neither denial nor refutation from me. The Castle scoundrels shall play the whole game themselves, and whenever you agree 'what's to pay,' I'll settle the score without flinching."

This extraordinary address, uttered in a tone of half-savage jocularity, excited a strange mixture of emotion in those who heard it, which ultimately ended in half-subdued laughter throughout the court, repressing which at once, the judge gravely reprimanded the prisoner for the aspersions he had thrown on the administration of justice, and appointed one of the most distinguished members of the bar to conduct his defence.

It was late in the day when the Crown counsel rose to open his case. His address was calm and dispassionate. It was divested of what might seem to be any ungenerous allusion to the peculiar character or temperament of the accused; but it promised an amount of circumstantial evidence which, were the credit of the witnesses to stand unimpeached, would be almost impossible to reconcile with anything short of the guilt of the prisoner in the dock.

"We shall show you, gentlemen of the jury," said he, "first of all, that there was a manifest motive for this crime — at least, what to a man of the prisoner's temper and passions might adequately represent a motive. We shall produce evidence before you, to

prove his arrival secretly in Dublin, where he lodged in an obscure and little-frequented locality, avoiding all occasion of recognition, and passing under an assumed name. We shall show you, that on each evening he was accustomed to visit an acquaintance — a solicitor, whom we shall produce on the table — whose house is situated at the very opposite end of the city; returning from which, it was his habit to pass through Stephen's Green, and that he took this path on the night of the murder — having parted from his friend a little before midnight. We shall next show you, that the traces of the footsteps correspond exactly with his boots, even to certain peculiarities in their make. And lastly, we shall prove his immediate and secret departure from the capital on this very night in question — his retirement to a distant part of the country, where he remained till within a few days previous to his arrest.

"Such are the brief outlines of a case, the details of which will comprise a vast number of circumstances — slight, perhaps, and trivial individually, but which, taken collectively, and considered in regard to their bearing on the matter before us, will make up a mass of evidence, that the most sceptical cannot reject.

"Although it may not be usual to advert to the line of conduct which the prisoner has adopted, in refusing to name a counsel for his defence, I cannot avoid warning the jury, that such a course may bear an interpretation very remote from that which at first sight it seems to convey. He would wish you to accept this position as the strongest evidence of innocence; as if, relying on the justice of his cause, he required neither guidance nor counsel!

"It will be for you, gentlemen, to determine if the evidence placed before you admit of such a construction; or whether, on the contrary, it be not of such a nature that would foil the skill of the craftiest advocate to shake, and be more effectually rebutted by a general and vague denial, than by any systematic endeavours to impeach.

"You are not therefore to accept this rejection of aid as by any means a proof of conscious innocence. Far from it. The more correct reading might show it to be the crafty policy of a man who, throughout his whole life, has been as remarkable for self-reliance as for secrecy; who, confiding in his own skill to direct him in the most difficult circumstances, places far more reliance on his personal adroitness than upon the most practised advocacy; and whose depreciatory estimate of mankind is but the gloomy reflection of a burthened conscience."

It was so late when the counsel had concluded, that the court adjourned its proceedings till the following morning; and the vast assembly which thronged the building dispersed, deeply impressed with the weighty charge against the prisoner, and with far less of sympathy than is usually accorded to those who stand in like predicament.

CHAPTER XVI.

An Unlooked-for Disclosure.

On the second day of the trial, the court-house was even more densely crowded than on the first. The rank and station which the accused had held in society, as well as the mysterious character of the case itself, had

invested the event with an uncommon interest; and long before the doors were opened, a vast concourse filled the streets, amidst which were to be seen the equipages of many of the first people of the country.

Scarcely had the judges taken their places, when every seat in the court was occupied — the larger proportion of which displayed the rank and beauty of the capital, who now thronged to the spot, all animated with the most eager curiosity, and speculating on the result in a spirit which, whatever anxiety it involved, as certainly evinced little real sympathy for the fate of the prisoner. The bold, defiant tone which Curtis had always assumed in the world had made him but few friends, even with his own party; his sneering, caustic manner had rendered him unpopular; few could escape his censures — none his sarcasms. It would, indeed, have been difficult to discover one for whom less personal interest was felt, than for the individual who that morning stood erect in the dock, and with a calm but stern expression regarded the bench and the jury-box.

As the court continued to fill, Curtis threw his eyes here and there over the crowded assemblage, but in no wise disconcerted by the universal gaze of which he was the object. On the contrary, he nodded familiarly to some acquaintances at a distance; and, recognising one whom he knew well in the gallery over his head, he called out, —

"How are you, Ruxton? Let me advise you to change your bootmaker, or I wouldn't say that the Crown lawyers won't put you, one day, where I stand now!"

The laugh which followed this sally was scarcely

repressed, when the trial began. The first witness produced was a certain Joseph Martin, the solicitor at whose house Curtis had passed the evening on which the murder was committed. His evidence, of course, could throw little or no light upon the event, and merely went to establish the fact, that Curtis had stayed with him till nigh midnight, and left him about that hour to proceed to his home. When questioned as to the prisoner's manner and general bearing during that evening, he replied, that he could detect nothing strange or unusual in it; that he talked pretty much as he always did, and upon the same topics.

"Did he allude to the Government, or to any of its officials?" was then asked; and, before a reply could be given, Curtis cried out, —

"Yes. I told Martin that if the scoundrels who rule us should only continue their present game, nobody could regret the ruin of a country that was a disgrace to live in. Did'nt I say that?"

"I must remind you, sir," interposed the judge, gravely, "how seriously such conduct as this is calculated to prejudice the character of your defence."

"Defence! my lord," broke in Curtis, "when did I ever think of a defence? The gentlemen of the jury have heard me more plainly than your lordship. I told them, as I now tell you, that innocence is no protection to a man, when hunted down by legal bloodhounds; that —"

"I must enforce silence upon you, sir, if I cannot induce caution," said the judge, solemnly; "you may despise your own safety, but you must respect this court."

"You'll find that even a more difficult lesson to

teach me, my lord. I can remember some eight-and-forty years of what is called the administration of justice in Ireland. I am old enough to remember when you hanged a priest who married a Protestant, and disbarred the lawyer that defended him."

"Be silent, sir," said the judge, in a voice of command; and with difficulty was Curtis induced to obey the admonition.

As the trial proceeded, it was remarked that Colonel Vereker was seen in close communication with one of the Crown lawyers, who soon afterwards begged to tender him as a witness for the prosecution. The proposal itself, and the object it contained, were made the subject of a very animated discussion; and, although the testimony offered seemed of the greatest importance, the court decided that it was of a kind which, according to the strict rules of evidence, could not be received.

"Then you may rely upon it, gentlemen of the jury," cried Curtis, "it is favourable to me."

"Let me assure you, sir, to the contrary," said the judge, mildly; "and that it is with a jealous regard for your interest we have agreed not to accept this evidence."

"And have you had no respect for poor Vereker, my lord? He looks as if he really would like to tell the truth, for once in his life."

"If Colonel Vereker's evidence cannot be admitted upon this point, my lord," said the Crown lawyer, "there is yet another, in which it is all-essential. He was one of those who stood beside Rutledge on the balcony, when the words were uttered which attracted his notice. The tone of voice, and the manner in

which they were uttered, made a deep impression upon him, and he is fully persuaded that they were spoken by the prisoner in the dock."

"Let us listen to him about that," said Curtis, who now bestowed a more marked attention to the course of the proceeding. Vereker was immediately sworn, and his examination began. He detailed with great clearness the circumstances which preceded the fatal event, and the nature of the conversation on the balcony, till he came to that part where the interruption from the street took place. "There," he said, "I cannot trust my memory as to the words employed by Rutledge, although I am confident as to the phrase used in rejoinder, and equally certain as to the voice of him who uttered it."

"You mean to say," said the judge, "that you have recognised that voice as belonging to the prisoner."

"I mean to say, my lord, that were I to hear him utter the same words in an excited tone, I should be able to swear to them."

"That's a lie!" cried Curtis.

"These were the words, and that the voice, my lord," said Vereker; and as he spoke a deep murmur of agitated feeling rang through the crowded court.

"By Heaven!" cried Curtis, in a tone of passionate excitement, "I hold my life as cheaply as any man, but I cannot see it taken away by the breath of a false witness; let me interrogate this man?" In vain was it that the practised counsel appointed to conduct his case interposed, and entreated of him to be silent. To no purpose did they beg of him to leave in their hands the difficult game of cross-examination. He rejected their advice as haughtily as he had refused their

services, and at once addressed himself to the critical task.

"With whóm had you dined, sir, on the day in question — the 7th of June?" asked he of Vereker.

"I dined with Sir Marcus Hutchinson."

"There was a large party?"

"There was."

"Tell us, so far as you remember, the names of the guests."

"Some were strangers to me, from England, I believe; but of those I knew before, I can call to mind Leonard Fox, Hamilton Gore, John Fortescue, and his brother Edward, Tom Beresford, and poor Rutledge."

"It was a convivial party, and you drank freely?"

"Freely, but not to excess."

"You dined at five o'clock?"

"At half-after five."

"And rose from table about eleven?"

"About that hour."

"There were speeches made, and toasts drank, I believe?"

"There were — a few."

"The toasts and the speeches were of an eminently loyal character; they all redounded to the honour and credit of the Government?"

"Highly so."

"And as strikingly did they reflect upon the character of all Irishmen who opposed the ministry, and assumed for themselves the position of patriots. Come, sir, no hesitation — answer my question boldly. Is this not true?"

"We certainly did not regard the party you speak of as being true and faithful subjects of the king."

"You thought them rebels?"

"Perhaps not exactly rebels."

"You called them rebels; and you yourself prayed that the time was coming when the lamp-iron and the lash should reward their loyalty. Can you deny this?"

"We had a great deal of conversation about politics. We talked in all the freedom of friendly intercourse, and, doubtless, with some of that warmth which accompanies after-dinner discussions. But as to the exact words ——"

"It is the exact words I want — it is the exact words I insist upon, sir. They were used by yourself, and drew down rounds of applause. You were eloquent and successful."

"I am really unable, at this distance of time, to recollect a word or a phrase that might have fallen from me in the heat of the moment."

"This speech of yours was made about the middle of the evening?"

"I believe it was."

"And you afterwards sat a considerable time, and drank freely?"

"Yes."

"And although your recollection of what passed before that is so obscure and inaccurate, you perfectly remember everything that took place when standing on the balcony two hours later, and can swear to the very tone of a voice that uttered but three words — 'That is a lie, sir!'"

"Prisoner at the bar, conduct yourself with the

respect due to the court, and to the witness under its protection," interposed the judge, with severity.

"You mistake me, my lord," said Curtis, in a voice of affected deprecation. "The words I spoke were not used as commenting on the witness, or his veracity. They were simply those to which he swore — those which he heard once — and, although after a five hours' debauch, remained fast graven on his memory, along with the very manner of him who uttered them. I have nothing more to ask him. He may go down — down!" repeated he solemnly, "if there be yet anything lower that he can descend to!"

Once more did the judge admonish the prisoner as to his conduct, and feelingly pointed out to him the serious injury he was inflicting upon his own case by this rash and intemperate course of proceeding; but Curtis smiled half contemptuously at the correction, and folded his arms with an air of dogged resignation.

It is rarely possible, from merely reading the published proceedings of a trial, to apportion the due degree of weight which the testimony of the several witnesses imposes, or to estimate that force which manner and conduct supply to the evidence when orally delivered. In the present case, the guilt of the accused man rested on the very vaguest circumstances, not one of which but could be easily and satisfactorily accounted for on other grounds. He admitted that he had passed through Stephen's Green on the night in question, and that possibly the tracks imputed to him were actually his own; but as to the reasons for his abrupt departure from town, or the secrecy which he observed when writing to the bootmaker — these,

he said, were personal matters which he would not condescend to enter upon, adding, sarcastically, —

"That though they might not prove very damning omissions in defence of a hackney-coach summons, he was quite aware that they might prove fatal to a man who stood charged with murder."

After a number of witnesses were examined, whose testimony went to prove slight and unimportant facts, Anthony Fagan was called to show that a variety of bill transactions had passed between the prisoner and Rutledge, and that on more than one occasion very angry discussions had occurred between them in reference to these.

There were many points in which Fagan sympathised with the prisoner. Curtis was violently national in his politics. He bore an unmeasured hatred to all that was English; he was an extravagant asserter of popular rights; and yet, with all these, and, stranger still, with a coarse manner, and an address totally destitute of polish, he was in heart a haughty aristocrat, who despised the people most thoroughly. He was one of that singular class who seemed to retain to the very last years of the past century, the feudal barbarism of a by-gone age.

Thus was it that the party who accepted his advocacy had to pay the price of his services in deep humiliation; and many there were who felt that the work was more than requited by the wages.

To men like Fagan, whose wealth suggested various ambitions, Curtis was peculiarly offensive, since he never omitted an occasion to remind them of their origin, and to show them that they were as utterly de-

barred from all social acceptance as in the earliest struggles of their poverty.

The majority of those in court, who only knew generally the agreement between Curtis and Fagan in political matters, were greatly struck by the decisive tone in which the witness spoke, and the damaging character of the evidence was increased by this circumstance.

Among the scenes of angry altercation between the prisoner and Rutledge, Fagan spoke to one wherein Curtis had actually called the other a "swindler." Rutledge, however, merely remarked upon the liberties which his advanced age entitled him to assume; whereupon Curtis replied, "Don't talk to me, sir, of age! I am young enough and able enough to chastise such as you!"

"Did the discussion end here?" asked the court.

"So far as I know, my lord, it did; for Mr. Rutledge left my office soon after, and apparently thinking little of what had occurred."

"If honest Tony had not been too much engrossed with the cares of usury," cried out Curtis from the dock, "he might have remembered that I said to Rutledge, as he went out, 'the man that injures Joe Curtis owes a debt that he must pay sooner or later.'"

"I remember the words now," said Fagan.

"Ay, and so have I ever found it," said Curtis, solemnly. "There are few who have gone through life with less good fortune than myself, and yet I have lived to see the ruin of almost every man that has injured me!"

The savage vehemence with which he uttered these

words caused a shudder throughout the crowded court, and went even further to criminate him in popular opinion than all that had been alleged in evidence.

When asked by the court if he desired to cross-examine the witness, Curtis, in a calm and collected voice, replied, —

"No, my lord; Tony Fagan will lose a hundred and eighty pounds if you hang me; and if he had anything to allege in my favour, we should have heard it before this." Then turning towards the jury-box, he went on: "Now, gentlemen of the jury, there's little reason for detaining you any longer. You have as complete a case of circumstantial evidence before you as ever sent an innocent man to the scaffold. You have had the traits of my temper and the tracks of my boots, and, if you believe Colonel Vereker, the very tones of my voice, all sworn to; but better than all these, you have at your disposal the life of a man who is too sick of the world to stretch out a hand to save himself, and who would even accept the disgrace of an ignominious death for the sake of the greater ignominy that is sure to fall later upon the unjust laws and the corrupt court that condemned him. Ay!" cried he, with an impressive solemnity of voice that thrilled through every heart, "you'll array yourselves in all the solemn mockery of your station — you'll bewail my guilt, and pronounce my sentence; but it is I, from this dock, say unto you upon that bench, the Lord have mercy upon your souls!"

There was that in the energy of his manner, despite all its eccentricity, and quaintness, a degree of power that awed the entire assembly; and more than

one trembled to think, "What! if he really were to be innocent!"

While this singular address was being delivered, Fagan was engaged in deep and earnest conversation with the Crown prosecutor; and from his excited manner might be seen the intense anxiety under which he laboured. He was evidently urging some proposition with all his might, to which the other listened with deep attention.

At this instant Fagan's arm was tapped by a hand from the crowd. He turned, and as suddenly grew deadly pale; for it was Raper stood before him! — Raper, whom he believed at that moment to be far away in a remote part of the country.

"What brings you here? How came you to Dublin?" said Fagan, in a voice tremulous with passion.

"We have just arrived; we heard that you were here; and he insisted upon seeing you before he left town."

"Where is he, then?" asked Fagan.

"In his carriage at the door of the court-house."

"Does he know — has he heard of the ćase before the court? Speak, man! Is he aware of what is going on here?"

The terrified eagerness of his whisper so overcame poor Raper, that he was utterly unable to reply, and Fagan was obliged to clutch him by the arm to recall him to consciousness. Even then, however, his vague and broken answer showed how completely his faculties were terrorised over by the despotic influence of his master. An indistinct sense of having erred somehow overcame him, and he shrank back from the piercing

glance of the other, to hide himself in the crowd. Terrible as that moment of suspense must have been to Fagan, it was nothing to the agony which succeeded it, as he saw the crowd separating on either side to leave a free passage for the approach of an invalid, who slowly came forward to the side-bar, casting his eyes around him, in half-bewildered astonishment at the scene.

Being recognised by the bench, an usher of the court was sent round to say that their lordships would make room for him beside them; and my father — for it was he — with difficulty mounted the steps, and took his seat beside the Chief Justice, faintly answering the kind inquiries for his health in a voice weak and feeble as a girl's.

"You little expected to see me in such a place as this, Walter!" cried out Curtis from the dock; "and I just as little looked to see your father's son seated upon the bench at such a moment!"

"What is it? — what does it all mean? — how is Curtis there? — what has happened?" — asked my father, vaguely.

The Chief Justice whispered a few words in reply, when, with a shriek that made every heart cold, my father sprang to his feet, and, leaning his body over the front of the bench, cried out, —

"It was I killed Barry Rutledge! There was no murder in the case! We fought with swords; and there," said he, drawing the weapon, "there's the blade that pierced his heart! and here" (tearing open his vest and shirt) — "and here the wound he gave me in return. The outrage for which he died well

merited the penalty; but if there be guilt, it is mine, and mine only!"

A fit of choking stopped his utterance. He tried to overcome it; he gasped convulsively twice or thrice, and then, as a cataract of bright blood gushed from nostrils and mouth together, he fell back and rolled heavily to the ground — dead!

So exhausted was nature by this last effort, that the body was cold within an hour after.

CHAPTER XVII.

A Friend's Trials.

The day of my beloved father's funeral was that of my birth! It is not improbable that he had often looked forward to that day as the crowning event of his whole life, destining great rejoicings, and planning every species of festivity; and now the summer clouds were floating over the churchyard, and the gay birds were carolling over the cold grave where he lay!

What an emblem of human anticipation, and what an illustration of his own peculiar destiny! Few men ever entered upon life with more brilliant prospects. With nearly every gift of fortune, and not one single adverse circumstance to struggle against, he was scarcely launched upon the ocean of life ere he was shipwrecked! Is it not ever thus? Is it not that the storms and seas of adverse fortune are our best preservatives in this world, by calling into activity our powers of energy and of endurance? Are we not better when our lot demands effort, and exacts sacrifice, than when prosperity neither evokes an ungratified wish nor suggests a difficult ambition?

The real circumstances of his death were, I believe, never known to my mother, but the shock of the event almost killed her. Her cousin, Emile de Gabriac, had just arrived at Castle Carew, and they were sitting talking over France and all its pleasant associations, when a servant entered hastily with a letter for MacNaghten. It was in Fagan's handwriting, and marked "Most private, and with haste."

"See," cried Dan, laughing — "look what devices a dun is reduced to, to obtain an audience. Tony Fagan, so secret and so urgent on the outside, will be candid enough within, and beg respectfully to remind Mr. MacNaghten that his endorsement for two hundred and something pounds will fall due on Wednesday next, when he hopes — —"

"Let us see what he hopes," cried my mother, snatching the letter from him, "for it surely cannot be that he hopes you will pay it." The terrific cry she uttered, as her eyes read the dreadful lines, rang through that vast building. Shriek followed shriek in quick succession for some seconds; and then, as if exhausted nature could no more, she sank into a death-like trance, cold, motionless, and unconscious.

Poor MacNaghten! I have heard him more than once say, that if he were to live five hundred years, he never could forget the misery of that day, so graven upon his memory was every frightful and harrowing incident of it. He left Castle Carew for Dublin, and hastened to the court-house, where, in one of the judges' robing-rooms, the corpse of his poor friend now lay. A hurried inquest had been held upon the body, and pronounced that "Death had ensued from natural causes;" and now the room was crowded with curious and idle

loungers, talking over the strange event, and commenting upon the fate of him whom, but a few hours back, so many would have envied.

Having excluded the throng, he sat down alone beside the body, and, with the cold hand clasped between his own, wept heartily.

"I never remember to have shed tears before in my life," said he, "nor could I have done so then, if I were not looking on that pale, cold face, which I had seen so often lighted up with smiles; on those compressed lips, from which came so many words of kindness and affection; and felt within my own that hand that never till now had met mine without the warm grasp of friendship."

Poor Dan! he was my father's chief mourner; I had almost said his only one. Several came and asked leave to see the body. Many were visibly affected at the sight. There was decent sorrow on every countenance; but of deep and true affliction, MacNaghten was the solitary instance.

It was late on the following evening as MacNaghten, who had only quitted the rooms for a few minutes, found, on his return, that a stranger was standing beside the body.

"Ay," muttered he, solemnly, "the green and the healthy tree cut down, and the old, sapless, rotten trunk left to linger on in slow decay!"

"What! Curtis, is this you?" cried MacNaghten.

"Yes, sir, and not mine the fault that I have not changed places with him who lies there. He had plenty to live for; I nothing, nor any one. And it was not that alone, MacNaghten!" added he, fiercely, "but think — reflect for one moment, on what might have

happened, had they condemned and executed me! Is there a man in all Ireland, with heart and soul in him, who would not have read that sentence as an act of Government tyranny and vengeance? Do you believe the gentry of the country would have accepted the act as an accident, or do you think that the people would recognise it as anything else than a murder solemnised by the law? And if love of country could not stimulate and awake them, is it not possible that fears for personal safety might?"

"I have no mind for such thoughts as these," said MacNaghten, sternly: "nor is it beside the cold corpse of him who lies there I would encourage them. If you come to sorrow over him, take your place beside me; if to speculate on party feuds or factious dissensions, then I beg you will leave me to myself."

Curtis made him no reply, but left the room in silence.

There were some legal difficulties raised before the funeral could be performed. The circumstances of Rutledge's death required to be cleared up: and Fagan — to whom my father had made a full statement of the whole event — underwent a long and close examination by the law authorities of the Castle. The question was a grave one as regarded property, since, if a charge of murder could have been substantiated, the whole of my father's fortune would have been confiscated to the Crown. Fagan's testimony, too, was not without a certain disqualification, because he held large liens over the property, and must, if the estate were estreated, have been a considerable loser. These questions all required time for investigation; but, by dint of great energy and perseverance, MacNaghten obtained per-

mission for the burial, which took place with strict privacy at the small churchyard of Killester, a spot which, for what reason I am unaware, my father had himself selected, and mention of which desire was found amongst his papers.

Fagan accompanied MacNaghten to the funeral, and Dan returned to his house afterwards to breakfast. Without any sentiment bordering on esteem for the "Grinder," MacNaghten respected him generally for his probity, and believed him to be as honourable in his dealings as usury and money-lending would permit any man to be. He was well aware, that for years back the most complicated transactions with regard to loans had taken place between him and my father; and that, to a right understanding of these difficult matters, and a satisfactory adjustment of them, nothing could conduce so much as a frank intercourse and a friendly bearing. These were at all times no very difficult requirements from honest Dan, and he did not assume them now with less sincerity or willingness that they were to be practised for the benefit of his poor friend's widow and orphan.

MacNaghten could not help remarking that Fagan's manner, when speaking of my father's affairs, was characterised by a more than common caution and reserve, and that he strenuously avoided entering upon anything which bore, however remotely, upon the provision my mother was to enjoy, or what arrangements were to be made respecting myself.

"There was a will, he thought, in Crowther's possession; but it was of the less consequence, since the greater part — nearly all — of the Carew property was under the strictest entail."

"The boy will be rich, one of the richest men in Ireland, if he live," said MacNaghten; but Fagan made no reply for some time, and at last said, —

"If there be not good sense and moderation exercised on all sides, the Carews may gain less than will the Court of Chancery."

MacNaghten felt far from reassured by the cautious and guarded reserve of Fagan's manner; he saw that in the dry, sententious tone of his remarks, there lurked difficulties, and perhaps troubles; but he resolved to devote himself to the task before him, in a spirit of patience and calm industry, which, unhappily for him, he had never brought to bear upon his own worldly fortunes.

"There is nothing either obtrusive or impertinent," said he, at last, to Fagan, "in my making these inquiries, for, independently of poor Walter's affection for me, I know that he always expected me to take the management of his affairs, should I survive him; and if there be a will, it is almost certain that I am named his executor in it."

Fagan nodded affirmatively, and merely said, —

"Crowther will be able to clear up this point."

"And when shall we see him?"

"He is in the country, down south, I think, at this moment; but he will be up by the end of the week. However, there are so many things to be done, that his absence involves no loss of time. Where shall I address you, if I write?"

"I shall return to Castle Carew this evening; and in all probability remain there till I hear from you."

"That will do," was the dry answer; and MacNaghten took his leave, more than ever puzzled by

the Grinder's manner, and wondering within himself in what shape and from what quarter might come the storm, which he convinced himself could not be distant.

Grief for my father's death, and anxiety for my poor mother's fate, were, however, the uppermost thoughts in his mind; and as he drew nigh Castle Carew, his heart was so much overpowered by the change which had fallen upon that once happy home, that he totally forgot all the dark hints and menacing intimations of his late interview.

It was truly a gloom-stricken mansion. The servants moved about sadly, conversing in low whispers; save in one quarter all the windows were closed, and the rooms locked up — not a voice nor a footstep was to be heard. Mourning and woe were imprinted on every face, and in every gesture. MacNaghten knew not where to go, nor where to stay. Every chamber he entered was full of its memories of the past, and he wandered on from room to room, seeking some spot which should not remind him of days whose happiness could never return. In this random search he suddenly entered the chamber where M. de Gabriac lay at full length upon a sofa, enjoying, in all the ease of a loose dressing-gown, the united pleasures of a French novel and a bottle of Bordeaux. MacNaghten would willingly have returned at once. Such a scene and such companionship were not to his taste, but the other quickly detected him, and called out, —

"Ah! M. MacNaghten, how delighted am I to see you again! What days of misery and gloom have I been passing here! — no one to speak to — none to sit with."

"It is, indeed, a sad mansion," sighed MacNaghten, heavily.

"So, then, it is all true?" asked the other. "Poor fellow, what a sensitive nature — how impressible. To die just for a matter of sentiment; for, after all, you know it was a sentiment, nothing else. Every man has had his affairs of this kind; few go through life without something unpleasant; but one does not die broken-hearted for all that. No, parbleu, that is a very poor philosophy. Tell me about the duel — I am greatly interested to hear the details."

To escape as far as possible any further moralisings of his companion, Dan related all that he knew of the fatal rencontre, answering, so well as he might, all the Frenchman's questions, and, at the same time, avoiding all reference to the provocation which led to the meeting.

"It was a mistake, a great mistake, to fight in this fashion," said Gabriac, coldly. "There is an etiquette to be observed in a duel as in a dinner; and you can no more hurry over one than the other, without suffering for it afterwards. Maybe these are, however, the habits of the country."

MacNaghten calmly assured him that they were not.

"Then the offence must have been an outrage — what was it?"

"Some expression of gross insult; I forget the exact nature of it."

"Poor fellow," said the other, sipping his wine, "with so much to live for: a magnificent chateau, a pretty wife, and a good fortune. What folly, was it not?"

MacNaghten afterwards acknowledged that even the Grinder's sententious dryness was preferable to the heartless indifference of the Frenchman's manner; but a deferential regard for her whose relative he was, restrained him from all angry expression of feeling on the subject, and he suffered him to discuss the duel and all its consequences, without the slightest evidence of the suffering it cost him.

"Josephine will not be sorry to leave it," said Gabriac, after a short silence. "She told me that they never understood her, nor she them; and after all, you know," said he, smiling, "there is but one France!"

"And but one Ireland!" said MacNaghten, heartily.

"Heureusement!" muttered the Frenchman, but employing a word which, happily, the other did not understand.

"Her state is one of great danger still," said Dan, alluding to my mother.

"They say so; but that is always the way with doctors. One may die of violent anger, rage, ungratified vengeance, jealousy, but not of mere grief. Sorrow is rather a soothing passion — don't you think so?"

Had MacNaghten been in the mood, he might have laughed at the remark, but now it only irritated and incensed him; and to such an extent did the heartless manner of the Frenchman grate upon his feelings, that he was in momentary danger of including my poor mother in the depreciatory estimate he conceived of France, and all that belonged to it. Nor was his temper improved by the inquiries of Gabriac concerning the property and estates of my father; in fact, unable any longer to continue a conversation, every por-

tion of which was an outrage, he arose abruptly, and wishing him a good night, left the room.

"Poor Walter," said he, as he slowly sauntered along towards his chamber, "is it to such as these your memory is to be entrusted, and your name and fortune bequeathed?" And with this gloomy reflection, he threw himself upon his bed, to pass a sad and a sleepless night.

It was in a curious reverie — a kind of inquiring within himself, "How came it that qualities so calculated to make social intercourse delightful in days of happiness, should prove positively offensive in moments of trial and affliction?" for such he felt to be the case as regarded Gabriac — that MacNaghten lay, when a servant came to inform him that Mr. Crowther had just arrived at the Castle, and earnestly requested to see him.

"At once," replied he, "show him up to me here;" and in a few moments that most bland and imperturbable of solicitors entered, and, drawing a chair to the bed-side, sat down.

"This is a sad occasion, Mr. MacNaghten. I little thought when I last saw you here, that my next visit would have been on such an errand."

MacNaghten nodded sorrowfully, and Crowther went on, —

"Sad in every sense, sir," sighed he, heavily. "The last of his name — one of our oldest gentry — the head of a princely fortune — with abilities, I am assured, of a very high order, and, certainly, most popular manners."

"You may spare me the eulogy," said MacNaghten, bluntly. "He was a better fellow than either you or

I should be able to describe, if we spent an hour over it."

Crowther took the rebuke in good part, and assented to the remark with the best possible grace. Still he seemed as if he would like to dwell a little longer on the theme before he proceeded to other matters. Perhaps he thought by this to secure a more favourable acceptance for what he had to say; perhaps he was not fully made up in mind how to approach the subject before him. MacNaghten, who always acted through life as he would ride in a steeple-chase, straight onward, regardless of all in his way, stopped him short, by saying, —

"Carew has left a will in your hands, I believe?"

"You can scarcely call it a will, sir. The document is very irregular — very informal."

"It was his act, however; he wrote or dictated it himself?"

"Not even that, sir. He suggested parts of it — made trifling corrections with his own pen — approved some portions, and left others for after-consideration."

"It is, at all events, the only document of the kind in existence?"

"That would be too much to affirm, sir."

"I mean that you, at least, know of no other; in fact, I want to hear whether you conceive it to be sufficient for its object, as explaining Carew's wishes and intentions."

A dubious half-smile, and a still more dubious shake of the head, seemed to infer that this view of the subject was far too sweeping and comprehensive.

"Come, come," said Dan, good humouredly, "I'm not the Chancellor, nor even Master of the Rolls. Even

a little indiscretion will never injure your reputation in talking with me. Just tell me frankly what you know and think about my poor friend's affairs. His widow, if she ever recover, which is very doubtful, is but little suited to matters of business; and as it is not a case where any adverse litigation is to be apprehended — what do you mean by that shake of the head? You surely would not imply that the estate, or any part of it, could be contested at law?"

"Who could say as much for any property, sir?" said Crowther, sententiously.

"I know that; I am well aware that there are fellows in your tribe, who are always on the look-out for a ship-wrecked fortune, that they may earn the salvage for saving it; but here, if I mistake not very much, is an estate that stands in need of no such aids. Carew may have debts."

"Very large debts — debts of great amount, indeed!"

"Well, be it so; there ends the complication."

"You have a very concise and, I must say, a most straightforward mode of regarding a subject, sir," said Crowther, blandly. "There is an admirable clearness in your views, and a most business-like promptitude in your deductions; but we, poor moles of the law, are condemned to work in a very different fashion — and, to be brief, here is a case that requires the very nicest management. To enable Madame Carew to take out letters of administration to her late husband's property, we must prove her marriage. Now, so far as I can see, sir, this is a matter of considerable difficulty."

"Why, you would not dare to assert — to insinuate even —"

"Nothing of the kind, sir. Pray, be calm, Mr. MacNaghten. I am as incapable of such a thought as yourself. Of the fact, I entertain no more doubt than you do. The proof of it — the legal proof, however, I am most anxious to obtain."

"But, with search amongst his papers —"

"Very true, sir; it may be discovered. I have no doubt it will be discovered. I only mean to say that such a document is not to be met with amongst those in my hands, and I have very carefully gone over a large packet, labelled 'Papers and letters relating to France during my last residence there in '80-'81,' which you may remember was the period of his marriage."

"But he alludes to that event?"

"Not once, sir; there is not a single passage that even bears upon it. There are adventures of various kinds, curious incidents, many of them in love, play, and gallantry; but of marriage, or even of any speculation on the subject, not the remotest mention."

"This is most singular!"

"Is it not so, sir? But I have thought, perhaps, that you, who were always his most attached friend — you, at least, possessed some letters which should throw light upon this matter, even to indicate the exact date of it, where it occurred, who the witnesses."

"Not a line, not a syllable," said MacNaghten, with a sigh.

"This is more unfortunate than I expected," said Crowther. "I always said to myself, 'Well, in his private correspondence, in the close relations of friend-

ship, we shall come upon some clue to the mystery.' I always understood that with you he was frankness itself, sir?"

"So he was," rejoined MacNaghten.

"This reserve is therefore the more remarkable still. Can you account for it in any way, sir?"

"Why should I account for it?" cried Dan, passionately. "My friend had his own reasons for whatever he did — good and sufficient ones, I'll be sworn."

"I feel assured of that, sir, don't mistake me for a moment, or suppose I am impugning them. I merely desired to learn if you could, from your intimate knowledge of your friend's character, trace this reserve on his part to any distinct cause."

"My knowledge of him goes this far," said MacNaghten, haughtily, "that he had an honourable motive for every act of his life."

It required some address on Crowther's part to bring back MacNaghten to that calm and deliberate tone of mind which the subject demanded. After a while, however, he perfectly succeeded; and Dan arose and accompanied him to the library, where they both proceeded to search among my father's papers, with which several boxes were filled.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Disappointments.

THE search for any document that could authenticate my father's marriage proved totally unsuccessful, and, although poor MacNaghten's zeal was untiring and unwearied, all his efforts were fruitless.

Guided by the clue afforded in some of my father's letters, Dan proceeded to Wales, ascertained the cottage where they had passed their first month of married life, and found out many who had known them by sight; but could chance upon nothing which should lead him to the important fact, where, and by whom, the marriage ceremony was solemnised.

The state of my mother's health was so precarious for a long time, as to render all inquiry from her impracticable; while there was also a very natural fear of the consequences that might ensue, were she to suspect the object of any investigation, and learn the perilous position in which she stood. Her condition was, indeed, a pitiable one — a young and widowed mother; a stranger in a foreign land, of whose language she knew scarcely anything; without one friend of her own sex, separated by what, in those days, seemed an immense distance from all belonging to her. It was a weary load of misfortune to be borne by one who, till that moment, had never known a sorrow.

Nor was MacNaghten's lot more enviable, as, day by day, he received packets of letters detailing the slow but steady march of those legal proceedings, which were to end in the ruin of those whom he felt to have been bequeathed to his friendship. Already two claimants for the estate had appeared in the field — one, a distant relation of my father, a very rich southern baronet, a certain Carew O'Moore; the other, an unknown, obscure person, whose pretensions, it was said, were favoured by Fagan, and at whose cost the suit was said to be maintained. With the former, MacNaghten at once proceeded to open relations personally, by a letter, describing in simple but touching terms

the sad state in which my poor mother yet lay, and appealing to his feelings as a gentleman, and a man of humanity, to stay the course of proceedings for a while, at least, and give time to enable her to meet them by such information as she might possess.

A very polite reply was, at once, returned to this, assuring MacNaghten that whatever delays could be accorded to the law proceedings — short of defeating the object altogether — should certainly be accorded; that nothing was further from Sir Carew's desire than to increase, in the slightest, the sorrows of one so heavily visited; and expressing, in conclusion, a regret that his precarious health should preclude him paying his personal visit of condolence at the Castle, where, he trusted, the lady would continue to reside so long as her health or convenience made it desirable. If the expressions of the letter were not as hearty and generous as honest Dan might have wished them, they were more gratifying than the note he received from Fagan, written with all the caution and reserve of the Grinder's manner; for, while not going so far as to admit that he was personally interested and concerned for the new claimant, he guardedly avoided giving any denial to the fact.

For three weeks did MacNaghten continue to search through immense masses of papers and documents; he ransacked musty drawers of mustier cabinets; he waded through piles of correspondence, in the hope of some faint flickering of light, some chance phrase that might lead him to the right track, but without success! He employed trusty and sharp-witted agents to trace back, through England, the journey my father and mother had come by, but so secretly had every step

of that wedding tour been conducted, that no clue remained.

Amidst the disappointments of this ineffectual pursuit, there came, besides, the disheartening reflection, that from those who were most intimately acquainted with my father's affairs, he met neither counsel nor cooperation. On the contrary, Crowther's manner was close and secret on every matter of detail, and as to the chances of a suit, avowed how little ground they had for resistance. Fagan even went further, and spoke with an assumed regret, that my father should have made no provision for those belonging to him.

All these were, however, as nothing to the misery of that day in which MacNaghten was obliged to break the disclosure to my mother, and explain to her the position of ruin and humiliation in which she was placed! She was still weak and debilitated from her illness, her bodily strength impaired, and her mind broken by suffering, when this new shock came upon her; nor could she at first be made to understand the full measure of her misfortune, nor to what it exactly tended. That the home of her husband was no longer to be hers was a severe blow. It was endeared to her by so many of the tenderest recollections. It was all that really remained associated with him she had lost. "But, perhaps," thought she, "this is the law of the country; such are the inevitable necessities of the land." Her boy would, if he lived, one day possess it for his own, and upon this thought she fell back for consolation.

MacNaghten did not venture in his first interview to undeceive her; a second and even a third passed over without his being equal to the task; but the in-

exorable course of law gave, at last, no time for further delay. The tenants of the estate had received formal notice to pay the amount of their several holdings into court pending the litigation of the property. A peremptory order to surrender the house and demesne was also issued. The servants talked openly of the approaching break-up of the household, and already vague and shadowy rumours ran, that my father had died intestate, and that my mother was left without a shilling.

From early morning till late at night, MacNaghten had toiled without ceasing. He had visited lawyers — attended consultations — instituted fresh searches through Crowther's papers, but all with the same result. The most hopeful counsels only promised a barren resistance, the less sanguine advisers recommended any compromise that might secure to my mother some moderate competence to live on. So much had the course of events preyed upon his mind, and so dispirited had he grown, that, as he afterwards owned, he found himself listening to arguments, and willing to entertain projects, which, had they been presented but a few weeks before, he had rejected with scorn and indignation. It was then, too, and for the first time, that the possibility struck him that my father's marriage might have been solemnised without that formality which should make it good in law. He remembered the reserve with which, in all their frank friendship, the subject was ever treated. He bethought him of the reluctance with which my father suffered himself to be drawn into any allusion to that event; and that, in fact, it was the only theme on which they never conversed in perfect frankness and sincerity.

"After all," thought he, "the matter may be difficult of proof. There may have been reasons, real or imaginary, for secrecy; there may have been certain peculiar circumstances requiring unusual caution or mystery; but Watty was quite incapable of presenting to his friends and to the world as his wife, one who had not every title to the name, while she, who held that place, gave the best guarantee, by her manner and conduct, that it was hers by right." To this consolation he was obliged to fall back at each new moment of discomfiture; but, although it served to supply him with fresh energy and courage, it also oppressed him with the sad reflection, that conviction and belief in his friend's honour would have no weight in the legal discussion of the case, and that one scrawled fragment of paper would be better in evidence than all the trustfulness that was ever inspired by friendship.

If gifted with a far more than common amount of resolution and energy, MacNaghten was by nature impulsive to rashness, and consequently not well suited to deal with those who, more cautious by temperament, and less given to exhibit their feelings, find their profit in trading upon the warmer and less suspectful natures of others. In proportion as his daily disappointment preyed upon him, he displayed the effect in his manner and appearance, and at length, between mental agitation and bodily fatigue, became the mere wreck of what he had been. It was thus, that after a long day passed in toil and excitement, he strolled into one of the squares after nightfall, to seek in the solitude of the spot some calm and tranquillity for his harassed spirit.

It was the autumn — that season when Dublin is

almost deserted by its residents, and scarcely any of those who constitute what is called society were in the capital. MacNaghten therefore, was not likely to find any to interfere with the loneliness he sought for, and loitered unmolested for hours through the lanes and alleys of the silent square. There was a certain freshness in the night air that served to rally his jaded frame; and he felt, in the clear and half-frosty atmosphere, a sense of invigoration that made him unwilling to leave the spot. While thus gathering strength for the coming day, he thought he heard footsteps in the walk behind him; he listened, and now distinctly heard the sound of a voice talking in loud tones, and the shuffling sounds of feet on the gravel. Stepping aside into the copse, he waited to see who and for what purpose might they be, who came there at this unfrequented hour.

To his astonishment, a solitary figure moved past, walking with short, hasty steps, while he talked and gesticulated to himself with every appearance of intense excitement. MacNaghten had but to hear a word or two, at once to recognise the speaker as Curtis — that strange, half-misanthropic creature, who, partly from fault, and in part from misfortune, now lived in a state of friendless isolation.

It was rumoured that, although his bearing and manner before the Court displayed consummate coolness and self-possession, that the effect of the recent trial had been to shake his intellect seriously, and, while impressing upon him more strongly the notion of his being selected and marked out for persecution by the Government, to impart to him a kind of martyr's determination to perish in the cause. At no time were

he and Dan congenial spirits. Their natures and their temperaments were widely different; and, from the great disparity in their ages, as well as in all their associations, there was scarely one point of friendly contact in common to them.

There is a companionable element in misfortune, however, stronger than what we discover in prosperity; and partly from this cause, and partly from a sense of compassion, MacNaghten followed him quickly and hailed him by his name.

"Joe Curtis!" repeated the old man, stopping suddenly. "I submit, my lord, that this is an insufficient designation. I am Joseph Curtis, Esquire, of Meaghvalley House."

"With all my heart," said MacNaghten, cordially taking his hand and shaking it warmly, "though I think you'll suffer an old fried to be less ceremonious with you."

"Ah! you here, Dan MacNaghten — why, what in the name of all mischief has led you to this place? I thought I was the only maniac in this ward;" and he gave a harsh, grating laugh of irony at his own jesting allusion.

"I came here partly by accident, and have loitered from choice."

"We must take care that no gentlemen have fixed this evening for a meeting here," said Curtis, in a low guarded whisper. "You and I, NacNaghten, would fare badly — depend upon it. What! with our known reputations, and the nails in our boots — eh! the nails in our boots — they'll make what's called a strong case against us! You'd get off — they've nothing against you; but they'll not let me slip through, like

last time. Did you ever know such a close thing? The foreman, old Andrews, told me since, 'We had quite made up our minds, sir. We'd have said guilty without leaving the box.' Just think of their dilemma if they had hanged me! My papers, for I took care to leave all in writing, would have shown up the whole conspiracy. I set forth the game they have been playing since the year '42. I detailed all their machinations, and showed the secret orders they had given to each successive Viceroy. There were three men — only three men — in all Ireland that they dreaded! And that blundering fool, Carew, must rush in with his rashness and absurdity! Who ever heard or saw the like?"

"Poor fellow!" muttered MacNaghten.

"'Poor fellow,' as much as you wish, sir; but remember that some degree of consideration is due to me also! I was a prisoner seven weeks in Newgate; I stood in the dock, arraigned for a murder; I was on the eve of a false conviction and a false sentence, and there is no man living can say what results might not have followed on my being falsely executed. Your friend's stupid interference has spoiled everything, and you needn't ask me, at least, to feel grateful to him."

"There are men who, in your situation that day, would not hesitate to acknowledge their gratitude, notwithstanding," said MacNaghten.

"There are poor-spirited, contemptible curs in every country, sir, if you mean that!" said Curtis. "As for Carew, he was a gentleman by birth. He had the fortune and the education of one. He might, if he had wished it have been one of the first, if not the very first, men in this country. He thought it a finer thing

to be a horse-racer and a gambler. He saw greater distinction in being the dangler at the court of a foreign debauchee, to being the leading character in his own land. Don't interrupt me, sir," cried he, haughtily, waving his hand, while he went on with increased vehemence. "I tell you again, that Walter Carew might now have been a great living patriot — instead of —"

"If you utter one syllable of insult to his memory," broke in MacNaghten, boldly, "neither your age nor your folly shall save you — for, by Heaven —"

He stopped — for the aspect of the broken-down, white-haired figure in front of him, suddenly overcame him with shame for his own violence.

"Well, and what then?" said Curtis, calmly. "Shall I finish your threat for you? for, in truth, you seem quite unable to do so yourself. No, I'll not — Dan MacNaghten — never fear me. I'm just as incapable of defaming him who has left us, as you are of offering insult to an old, decrepit, half-crazed man, whose only use in life is, to cast obloquy upon those that have made him the thing he is."

"Forgive me, Curtis. I am heartily sorry for my rude speech," cried MacNaghten.

"Forgive you, sir!" said he, already following out another and a very different train of thought. "I have nothing to forgive. You were only doing what all the world does; what your Government and its authorities give the example of — insulting one whom it is safe to outrage! You treat me as you treat Ireland, that's all! Give me your hand, MacNaghten; I think, indeed I always said, you were the best of those fellows about Carew. If he hadn't been away from you, probably

he'd not have fallen into that stupid mistake — that French connection."

"His marriage, do you mean?" cried Dan, eagerly.

"Marriage, if you like to call it so!" rejoined the other.

"Have you a single doubt that it was such?"

"Have I a single reason to believe it?" said Curtis, doggedly. "If a man of fifteen thousand a-year takes a wife, he selects a woman whose rank and station are at least equal to his own, and he takes care besides that the world knows it. If she brings him no fortune, he makes the more fuss about her family, and parades her high relations. He doesn't wed in secret, and keep the day, the place, the witnesses, a mystery; he doesn't avoid even a chance mention of the event to his dearest friends; he doesn't settle down to live in an obscure retreat, when he owns a princely residence in the midst of his friends. When he does come back amongst them, he does not shrink from presenting her to the world; to be driven at last by necessity to the bold course — to fill his house with company, and see them drop off — fritter away one by one, distrustful, dissatisfied, and suspecting. Don't tell me, sir, that if he had a good cause and a safe cause behind him, that Walter Carew wouldn't have asked explanations, ay, and enforced them, too, from some of those guests who rewarded his hospitality so scurvily. You knew him well; and I ask you, was he the man to suffer the insolent attacks of the public journals, if it were not that he dreaded even worse exposures by provocation? You are a shrewd and a clever fellow, MacNaghten; and if you don't see this matter as all the world sees it —"

"And is this the common belief? Do you tell me that such is the impression abroad in society?"

"Consult Matt Fosbroke. Ask Harvey Hepton what his wife says. Go to George Tisdall and get his account of their departure from Castle Carew, and the answer they sent when invited there a second time."

"Why, all this is new to me!" cried MacNaghten, in amazement.

"To be sure, it's only circumstantial evidence," broke in Curtis, with a bitter laugh; "but that is precisely what the courts of law tell you is the most unimpeachable of all testimony. It may fail to convince you, but it would be quite sufficient to hang me!"

The bare recurrence, for a second, to this theme at once brought back the old man to his own case, into which he launched with all the fervour of a full mind; now, sneering at the capacity of those before whom he was arraigned — now detailing with delight the insolent remarks he had taken occasion to make on the administration of justice generally. It was in vain that MacNaghten tried to lead him away from the subject. It constituted his world to him, and he would not quit it. A chance mention of Fagan's name in the proceedings of the trial gave occasion at last for interruption, and MacNaghten said, —

"By the way, Fagan is a difficult fellow to deal with. You know him well, I believe?"

"Know him. Ay, that I do, sir. I have known that den of his since it was an apple-stall. My first post-obit was cashed by his worthy father. My last bill" — here he laughed heartily — "my last bill was protested by the son! And yet the fellow is afraid of

me. Ay, there is no man that walks this city he dreads so much as me!"

Curtis was so much in the habit of exaggerating his own importance, and particularly as it affected others, that MacNaghten paid but little attention to this remark, when the other quickly rejoined, —

"If you want to manage Fagan, take me with you. He'll not give you money on my bond, nor will he discount a bill for my name sake, but he'll do what costs him to the full as much — he'll tell you the truth, sir. Mark that — he'll tell you the truth."

"Will you accompany me to his house to-morrow?" asked Dan, eagerly.

"Ay, whenever you will.'

"I'll call upon you at ten o'clock, then, if not too early, and talk over the business for which I want your assistance. Where are you stopping?"

"My town residence is let to Lord Belview, and to avoid the noise and turmoil of a hotel, I live in lodgings," said Curtis, slowly, and with a certain pomposity of air and manner; suddenly changing which to his ordinary jocular tone, he said — "You have, maybe, heard of a place called Fum's-Alley. It lies in the Liberty, and opens upon that classic precinct called 'The Poddle.' There, sir, at a door over which a straw chair is suspended — it's the manufacture of the house — there, sir, lives Joe Curtis."

"I'll be with you at ten," said Dan; and with some passing allusion to the lateness of the hour, he led the way back into the town, where they parted.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Fum's-Alley, near the Poddle."

MacNaghten's object in seeking an interview with Fagan was to ascertain, in the first place, who that claimant to the estate was, whose views he advocated; and secondly, what prospect there might be of effecting some species of compromise, which should secure to my mother a reasonable competence. Although, in his isolation, he had grasped eagerly even at such co-operation as that of Curtis, the more he thought over the matter, the less reason did he see to rejoice in the alliance. Even before misfortune had affected his intellect, his temper was violent, and his nature impracticable. Always yielding to impulse far more than to mature judgment, he rushed madly on, scrambling from difficulty to difficulty, and barely extricated from one mishap till involved in another.

Such aid as he could proffer, therefore, promised little; and Dan felt more than half disposed to relinquish it. This, however, should be done with all respect to the feelings of Curtis, and, reflecting in what way the object could best be compassed, MacNaghten slowly sauntered onwards to the appointed place. It was not without some difficulty that he at last discovered the miserable lane, at the entrance to which a jaunting-car was now waiting — a mark of aristocratic intercourse which seemed, by the degree of notice it attracted, to show that such equipages rarely visited this secluded region. MacNaghten's appearance, however, soon divided public curiosity with the vehicle, and he was followed by a ragged gathering of every

age and sex, who very unceremoniously canvassed the object of his coming, and with a most laudable candour criticised his look and appearance. Although poor and wretched in the extreme, none of them asked alms, nor seemed in the slightest degree desirous of attracting attention to their own destitution.

"Is it a lodgin' yer honer wants?" whispered an old fellow on crutches, sidling close up to MacNaghten, and speaking in a confidential tone. "I've a back room looks out on the Poddle, for two shillings a-week, furnished."

"I've the elegant place Mary Murdock lived in for ten months, yer honer, in spite of all the polis', and might be livin' there yet, if she didn't take into her head to go to Fishamble Street play-house one night, and get arrested," cried a one-eyed old hag, with a drummer's coat on.

"He doesn't want a room — the gentleman isn't the likes of them that comes here," growled out a cripple, who, with the sagacity that often belongs to the maimed, seemed better to divine Dan's motives.

"You're right, my lad; I was trying to find out where a friend of mine lived — Mr. Curtis."

"Faix, ould Joe has company this mornin'," said the first speaker. "It was to see him that the fat man came on the jaunting-car."

"Are yiz goin' to try him agen?" said a red-eyed, fierce-looking woman, whose face was a mass of bruises.

"Sure the gentleman isn't a bailiff nor a polisman," broke in the cripple, rebukingly.

"There's not a man in the Poddle won't stand up for Joe Curtis, if he needs it," cried a powerfully-built

man, whose energy of manner showed that he was the leader of a party.

"Yer honer's looking for Kitty Nelligan, but she's gone," whispered a young creature, with a baby at her breast, and her eyes overran with tears as she spoke. "She died o' Friday last," added she, in a still fainter voice.

"Didn't ye hear him say it was Mister Joe he wanted? and there's the house he lives in," said another.

"Yis, but he can't go up to him now," said the man who affected to assume rule amongst them; "the one that came on the car said he wasn't to be disturbed on any account."

"Begorra," chimed in the cripple, "if it's a levee, yer honer must wait yer turn!"

"I'm quite willing," said Dan, good-humouredly, "a man has no right to be impatient in the midst of such pleasant company;" and as he spoke, he seated himself on a low stone bench beside the house-door, with all the ease of one bent on being companionable.

Had MacNaghten assumed airs of haughty superiority or insolent contempt for that motley assembly, he never could have attained to the position to which the last words, carelessly uttered as they were, at once raised him. They not only pronounced him a gentleman, but a man of the world besides — the two qualities in the very highest repute in that class by which he was surrounded. Instead, therefore, of the familiar tone they had previously used towards him, they now stood silently awaiting him to speak.

"Do the people hereabouts follow any particular trade?" asked Dan.

"'Tis straw chairs principally, your honer," replied the cripple, "is the manufacture of the place; but most of us are on the streets."

"On the streets — how do you mean?"

"There's Billy Glory, there yonder, he sings ballads; that man with the bit of crape round his hat hawks the papers; more of us cries things lost or stolen; and a few more lives by rows and rucktions at elections, and the like."

"Faix! and," sighed the strong man, "the trade isn't worth the following now. I remember when Barry O'Hara wouldn't walk the streets without a body-guard — five in front and five behind him — and well paid they were; and I remember Hamilton Brown payin' fifty of us to keep College-green against the Government, on a great Parliament night. Ay, and we did it too!"

"They wor good times for more than you," broke in the woman in the uniform coat; "I made seven and sixpence on Essex-bridge in one night by the 'Shan van voght.'"

"The grandest ballad that ever was written," chimed in an old man with one eye; "does ycr honer know it?"

"I'm ashamed to say not perfectly," said Dan, with an air of humility.

"Molly Daly's the one can sing it well, then," cried he; a sentiment re-echoed with enthusiasm by all.

"I'm low and down-hearted of a mornin'," said Molly, bashfully; "but maybe after a naggin and a pint I'll be better."

"Let me have the honour to treat the company," said Dan, handing a crown piece to one near him.

"If your honour wants to hear Molly, right, make her sing Tom Molloy's ballad for the Volunteers," whispered the cripple; and he struck up in a hoarse voice —

"Was she not a fool,
When she took off our wool,
To leave us so much of the
Leather — the leather!

"It ne'er entered her pate
That a sheepskin will 'bate,'
Will drive a whole nation
Together — together."

"I'd rather she'd sing Mosy Cassan's new song on Barry Rutledge," growled out a bystander.

"A song on Rutledge?" cried Dan.

"Yes, sir. It was describin' how Watty Carew enticed him down stairs, to kill him. Faix, but there's murder now goin' on up stairs; do ye hear ould Joe, how he's cursin' and swearin'?"

The uproar was assuredly enough to attract attention; for Curtis was heard screaming something at the top of his voice, and as if in high altercation with his visitor. MacNaghten accordingly sprang from his seat, and hurried up the stairs at once, followed by the powerful looking fellow I have already mentioned. As he came near Curtis's chamber, however, the sounds died away, and nothing could be heard but the low voices of persons conversing in ordinary tones together.

"Step in here, sir," said the fellow to Dan, unlocking a door at the back of the house; "step in here, and I'll tell you when Mister Joe is ready to see you."

MacNaghten accepted the offer, and now found himself in a mean-looking chamber, scantily furnished,

and looking out upon some of those miserable lanes and alleys with which the place abounded. The man retired, locking the door after him, and leaving Dan to his own meditations in solitude.

He was not destined to follow these thoughts long undisturbed, for again he could hear Curtis's voice, which, at first from a distant room, was now to be heard quite close, as he came into the very chamber adjoining that where Dan was.

"Come this way, come this way, I say," cried the old man, in a voice tremulous with passion. "If you want to seize, you shall see the chattels at once — no need to trouble yourself about an inventory! There is my bed; I got fresh straw into the sacking on Saturday. The blanket is a borrowed one; that horseman's cloak is my own. There's not much in that portmanteau," cried he, kicking it with his foot against the wall. "Two ragged shirts and a lambskin waistcoat, and the title deeds of estates, that not even your chicanery could get back for me. Take them all, take that old blunderbuss, and tell the Grinder that if I'd have put it to my head twenty years ago, it would have been mercy compared to the slow torture of his persecution!"

"My dear Mr. Curtis, my dear sir," interposed a bland, soft voice, that Dan at once recognised as belonging to Mr. Crowther, the attorney, "you must allow me once more to protest against this misunderstanding. There is nothing further from my thoughts at this moment than any measure of rigour or severity towards you."

"What do you mean, then, by that long catalogue of my debts? Why have you hunted me out, to show

me bills I can never pay, and bonds I can never release?"

"Pray be calm, sir; bear with me patiently, and you will see that my business here this morning is the very reverse of what you suspect it to be. It is perfectly true that Mr. Fagan possesses large, very large, claims upon you."

"How incurred, sir? — answer me that. Who can stand forty, fifty, ay, sixty per cent.? Has he not succeeded to every acre of my estate? Have I anything, except that settle-bed, that isn't his?"

"You cannot expect me to go at length into these matters, sir," said Crowther mildly; "they are now bygones, and it is of the future I wish to speak."

"If the past be bad, the future promises to be worse," cried Curtis, bitterly. "It is but sorry mercy to ask me to look forward!"

"I think I can convince you to the contrary, sir, if you vouchsafe me a hearing. I hope to show you that there are in all probability many happy years before you — years of ease and affluence. Yes, sir, in spite of that gesture of incredulity, I repeat it, of ease and affluence."

"So, then, they think to buy me at last!" broke in the old man. "The scoundrels must have met with few honest men, or they had never dared to make such a proposal. What do the rascals think to bribe me with — eh? tell me that."

"You persist in misunderstanding me, sir. I do not come from the Government — I would not presume to wait on you in such a cause!"

"What's the peerage to me? I have no descendants to profit by my infamy. I cannot barter my honour

for my children's greatness! I'm prouder with that old hat on my head than with the coronet, tell them that. Tell them that Joe Curtis was the only man in all Ireland they never could purchase; tell them that when I had an estate I swore to prosecute for a poacher their ducal Viceroy, if he shot a snipe over my lands, and that I'm the same man now I was then!"

Crowther sighed heavily, like one who has a wearisome task before him, but must go through with it.

"If I could but persuade you, sir, to believe that my business here has no connexion with politics whatever — that the Castle has nothing to do with it —"

"Ay, I see," cried Curtis, "it's Lord Charlemont sent you. It's no use; I'll have nothing to say to any of them. He's too fond of Castle dinners and Castle company for me! I never knew any good come of the patriotism that found its way up Corkhill at six o'clock of an evening!"

"Once for all, Mr. Curtis, I say that what brought me here this morning was to show you that Mr. Fagan would be willing to surrender all claim against you for outstanding liabilities, and besides to settle on you a very handsome annuity, in consideration of some concessions on your part, with respect to a property against which he has very large claims."

"What's the annuity — how much?" cried Curtis, hastily.

"What sum would you yourself feel sufficient, sir? He empowered me to consult your own wishes and expectations on the subject."

"If I was to say a thousand a-year, for instance?" said Curtis, slowly.

"I'm certain he would not object, sir."

"Perhaps if I said two, he'd comply?"

"Two thousand pounds a-year is a large income for a single man," replied Crowther, sententiously.

"So it is, but I could spend it. I spent eight thousand a-year once in my life, and when my estate was short of three! and that's what comes of it;" and he gave the settle-bed a rude kick as he spoke. "Would he give two? that's the question, Crowther; would he give two?"

"I do not feel myself competent to close with that offer, Mr. Curtis; but if you really think that such a sum is necessary —"

"I do — I know it; I couldn't do with a shilling less; in fact, I'd find myself restricted enough with that. Whenever I had to think about money it was hateful to me. Tell him two is the lowest, the very lowest, I'd accept of, and if he wishes to treat me handsomely he may exceed it. You're not to judge of my habits, sir, from what you see here," added he, fiercely; "this is not what I have been accustomed to. You don't know the number of people who look up to me for bread. My father's table was laid for thirty every day, and it had been well for us, if as many more were not fed at our cost elsewhere."

"I have often heard tell of Meaghvalley House and its hospitalities," said Crowther, blandly.

"'Come over and drink a pipe of port' was the invitation when I was a boy. A servant was sent round to the neighbourhood to say, that a hogshead of claret was to be broached on such a day, and to beg that the gentlemen around would come over and help to drink it — ay, to drink it out! Your piperly hounds, with their two bottle magnum, think themselves magnificent

now-a-days; why, in my time, they'd have been laughed to scorn!"

"They were glorious times, indeed," cried Crowther, with mad enthusiasm.

"Glorious times to beggar a nation, to prostitute public honour and private virtue," broke in Curtis, passionately; "to make men heartless debauchees, first, that they might become shameless scoundrels after; to teach them a youth of excess and an old age of venality. These were your Glorious Times! But you, sir, may be forgiven for praising them; to you, and others like you, they have been, indeed, 'Glorious Times!' Out of them grew those lawsuits and litigations that have enriched you, while they ruined us. Out of that blessed era of orgie and debauch came beggared families and houseless gentry; men whose fathers lay upon down couches, and whose selves sleep upon the like of that," and the rude settle rocked as his hand shook it. "Out upon your Glorious Times, say I; you might as well call the drunken scene of a dinner party a picture of domestic comfort and happiness! It was a long night of debauchery, and this, that we now see, is the sad morning afterwards! Do you know, besides, sir," continued he in a still fiercer tone, "that in those same 'Glorious Times,' you, and others of your stamp, would have been baited like badgers if found within the precincts of a gentleman's house? ay, faith, and if my memory does not betray me, I can call to mind one or two such instances."

The violence of the old man's passion seemed to have exhausted him, and he sat down on the bed, breathing heavily, and panting.

"Where were we?" cried he at last. "What was

it that we were arguing? Yes — ay — to be sure — these bills — these confounded bills. I can't pay them. I wouldn't if I could. That scoundrel Fagan has made enough of me without that! What was it you said of an annuity — there was some talk of an annuity, eh?"

Crowther bent down and spoke some words in a low, murmuring voice.

"Well, and for that what am I to do?" cried Curtis suddenly. "My share of the compact is heavy enough, I'll be sworn. What is it?"

"I think I can show you that it is not much of a sacrifice, sir. I know you hate long explanations, and I'll make mine very brief. Mr. Fagan has very heavy charges against an estate which is not unlikely to be the subject of a disputed ownership. It may be a long suit, with all the delays and difficulties of Chancery; and in looking over the various persons who may prefer claims here and there, we find your name amongst the rest, for it is a long list, sir. There may be forty, or forty-five in all! The principal one, however, is a wealthy baronet who has ample means to prosecute his claim, and with fair hopes of succeeding. My notion, however, was, that if Mr. Fagan could arrange with the several persons in the cause to waive their demands for a certain consideration, that it would not be difficult then to arrange some compromise with the baronet himself — he surrendering the property to Fagan for a certain amount, on taking it with all its liabilities. You understand?"

"And who's the owner?" asked Curtis shortly.

"He is dead, sir."

"Who was he when alive?"

"An old friend, or rather the son of an old friend of yours, Mr. Curtis!"

"Ah, Brinsley Morgan! I guess him at once; but you are wrong, quite wrong there, my good fellow. I havn't the shadow of a lien on his estate. We talked it over together one day, and Hackett, the Attorney-General, who was in the house, said, that my claim wasn't worth five shillings; but I'll tell you where I have a claim, at least Hackett said so, I have a very strong claim — no, no; I was forgetting again — my memory is quite gone. It is so hard when one grows old to bear the last ten or fifteen years in mind. I can remember my boyhood and my school days like yesterday. It is late events that confuse me! You'll scarce believe me when I tell you, I often find myself going to dine with some old friend, and only discover when I reach his door that he is dead and gone this many a day! There was something in my mind to tell you, and it has escaped me already. Oh! I have it. There are some curious old family papers in that musty-looking portmanteau. I should like to find out some clever fellow that would look them over without rushing me into a lawsuit, mind ye, for I have no heart for that now! My brother Harry's boy is dead. India finished him, poor fellow! That's the key of it — see if it will open the lock."

"If you like I'll take them back with me, sir, and examine them myself at home."

"Do so, Crowther; only understand me well, no bills of costs, my worthy friend; no searches after this, or true copies of that; I'll have none of them. As Dick Parsons said, I'd rather spend my estate at the 'Fives' than the 'Four' Courts."

Crowther gave one of his complacent laughs, and having induced Curtis to accept an invitation for the following day at dinner, he took the portmanteau under his arm and withdrew.

He had scarcely descended the stairs when Dan found the door unlocked, and proceeded to pay his visit to Curtis, his mind full of all that he had just overheard, and wondering at the many strange things he had been a listener to.

When MacNaghten entered, he found Curtis sitting at a table, with his head resting on his hand, and looking like one deeply engaged in thought. Dan saluted him twice, without obtaining a reply, and at last said, —

"They said that you had a visitor this morning, and so I have been waiting for some time to see you."

The other nodded assentingly, but did not speak.

"You are, perhaps, too much tired now," said Dan, in a kind voice, "for much talking. Come and have a turn in the open air. It will refresh you."

Curtis arose, and took his hat, without uttering a word.

"You are a good walker, Curtis," said MacNaghten. as they reached the street. "What say you, if we stroll down to Harold's-cross, and eat our breakfast at the little inn they call 'The Friar?'"

"Agreed," muttered the other, and walked along at his side without another word; while Dan, to amuse his companion, and arouse him from the dreary stupor that oppressed him, exerted himself in various ways, recounting the popular anecdotes of the

day, and endeavouring, so far as might be, to entertain him.

It was soon, however, evident that Curtis neither heard nor heeded the efforts the other was making, for he continued to move along with his head down, mumbling, at intervals, to himself certain broken and incoherent words. At first, MacNaghten hoped that this moody dejection would pass away, and his mind recover its wonted sharpness; but now he saw that the impression under which he laboured was no passing or momentary burden, but a heavy load that weighed wearily on his spirits.

"I am afraid you are scarcely so well as usual to-day?" asked Dan, after a long interval of silence between them.

"I have a pain hereabouts — it is not a pain either; but I feel uneasy," said Curtis, pushing his hat back from his forehead, and touching his temple with his finger.

"It will pass away with the fresh air and a hearty breakfast, I hope. If not, I will see some one on our return. Who is your doctor?"

"My doctor! You ask a man who has lived eighty-four years, who is his doctor! That nature that gave him a good stout frame; the spirit that told him what it could, and what it could not, bear — these, and a hearty contempt for physic, and all that live by it, have guided me so far, and you may call them my doctors if you wish."

Rather pleased to have recalled the old man to his habitual energy, Dan affected to contest his opinions by way of inducing him to support them; but he quickly saw his error, for Curtis, as though wearied

by even this momentary effort seemed more downcast and depressed than before.

MacNaghten, therefore, contented himself with some commonplace remarks about the country around and the road they were walking, when Curtis came to a sudden halt, and said, —

"You wouldn't take the offer, I'll be sworn. You'd say at once, — 'Show me what rights I'm surrendering — let me know the terms of the agreement.' But what signifies all that at my age? — the last of the stock besides! If I lay by what will pay the undertaker, it's all the world has a right to demand at my hands."

"Here's 'The Friar' — this is our inn," said MacNaghten; "shall I be the caterer, eh? What say you to some fried fish and a glass of Madeira, to begin with?"

"I'll have a breakfast, sir, that suits my condition," said Curtis, haughtily. "Send the landlord here for my orders."

"Here's our man, then," said MacNaghten, humouring the whim, as he pushed the innkeeper towards him.

"What's your name, my good fellow," asked Curtis, with a supercilious look at the short but well-conditioned figure before him.

"Billy Mathews, sir," said the other, with difficulty restraining a smile at the dilapidated look of his interrogator.

"Well, Mathews, keep the Billy for your equals, my good friend. Mathews, I say, let us have the best your house affords, served in your best room, and in your best manner. If I ate prison fare for nine weeks,

sir, it is no reason that I am not accustomed to something different. My name is Joseph Curtis, of Meaghvalley House. I sat in Parliament for eight-and-twenty years, for the borough of Killternon; and I was tried for a murder at the last commission. There, sir! it's not every day you have a guest who can say as much."

As the landlord was moving away to give his orders, Curtis called out once more, —

"Stay, sir; hear me out. There are spies of the Castle wherever I go. Who have you here just now? Who's in this house?"

"There's but one gentleman here at present, sir. I've known him these twenty years; and I'll vouch for it, he's neither a Government spy, nor an informer."

"And who will be satisfied with your guarantee, sir?" cried Curtis, insolently. "It's not a fellow in your position that can assure the scruples of a man in mine. Who is he? what's his name?"

"He's a respectable man, sir, well known in Dublin, and the son of one that held a good position once."

"His name — his name?" cried Curtis, imperiously.

"It's no matter about his name," replied the host, sulkily. "He has come to eat his breakfast here, as he does once or twice a week, and that's all that I have to say to him."

"But I'll have his name — I'll insist upon it," shouted out Curtis, in a voice of high excitement; "persecuted and hunted down as I am, I'll defend myself. Your Castle bloodhounds shall see that Joe Curtis will not run from them. This gentleman here is the

son of MacNaghten of Greenan. What signifies it to you if he be ruined! What affair is it of yours, I ask, if he hasn't sixpence in the world? — I'll pay for what he takes here. I'm responsible for everything. I have two thousand a-year secured on my life" — he stopped and seemed to reflect for a moment, then added — "that is, I may have it if I please."

MacNaghten made a signal for the innkeeper to serve the breakfast, and not notice any of the extravagances of his strange companion. Mathews was about to obey, when Curtis, recurring to his former thought, cried out, —

"Well, sir, this fellow's name?"

"Tell him who it is," whispered Dan, secretly; and the host said, —

"The gentleman is one Mr. Raper, sir, head clerk to Mr. Fagan of Mary's-abbey."

"Leave the room — close the door," said Curtis, with an air of caution. "I saw the signal you gave the innkeeper a moment ago, MacNaghten," said he, in the same low and guarded tone. "I read its meaning perfectly. You would imply — The old fellow is not right — a crack in the upper story — humour him a bit. Don't deny it, man; you acted for the best; you thought as many think, that my misfortunes had affected my intellect and sapped my understanding; and so they had done this many a day," added he, fiercely, "but for one thing. I had one grand security against madness, Dan; one great barrier, my boy — shall I tell it you? It was this, then — that if my head wandered sometimes, my heart never did — never! I hated the English and their party in this country with a hate that never slept, never relaxed! I knew well that

I was the only man in Ireland that they could not put down. Some they bought — some they ruined — some they intimidated — some they destroyed by calumny. They tried all these with me, and at last were driven to a false accusation, and had me up for a murder! and that failed them, too! Here I stand their opponent, just as I did fifty-two years ago, and the only man in all Ireland that dares to brave and defy them. They'd make me a peer to-morrow, Dan; they'd give me a colonial government; they'd take me into the Cabinet; there is not a demand of mine they'd say 'No' to, if I'd join them; but my answer is 'Never! never!' Go down to your grave, Joe Curtis, ruined, ragged, half-famished, mayhap. Let men call you a fool, and worse! but the time will come, and the people will say — There was once a man in Ireland that never truckled to the Castle, nor fawned on the Viceroy; and that when he stood in the dock, with his life on the venture, told them that he despised their vengeance, though he knew that they were covering it with all the solemnity of a law-court; and that man his contemporaries — ay, even his friends — were pleased to call Mad!"

"Come, come, Curtis, you know well this is not my impression of you; you only say so jestingly."

"It's a sorry theme to crack jokes upon," said the other, sadly. He paused, and seemed to reflect deeply for some minutes, and then, in a voice of peculiar meaning, and with a look of intense cunning in his small grey eyes, said, "We heard the name he mentioned — Raper, Fagan's man of business. Let's have him in, MacNaghten; the fellow is a half simpleton in many things. Let's talk to him."

"Would you ask Mr. Raper to join our breakfast?" asked Dan of the innkeeper.

"He has just finished his own, sir — some bread and watercresses, with a cup of milk, are all that he takes."

"Poor fellow!" said Dan, "I see him yonder in the summer-house; he appears to be in hard study, for he has not raised his head since we entered the room. I'll go and ask him how he is."

MacNaghten had not only time to approach the little table where Raper was seated unobserved, but even to look over the object of his study, before his presence was recognised.

"German, Mr. Raper; reading German," cried MacNaghten, "I know the characters at least."

"Yes, sir, it is German; an odd volume of Richter that I picked up a few days ago. A difficult author at first, somewhat involved and intricate in construction; here, for instance, is a passage —"

"My dear friend, it is all a Greek chorus to me, or anything else you can fancy equally unintelligible."

"It is the story of a humble man, a village cobbler, who becomes by an accident of fortune suddenly rich. Now the author, instead of describing the incidents of life and the vicissitudes that encounter him, leaves us only to guess, or rather to supply them for ourselves, by simply dwelling upon all the 'Gedänks-kriege,' or mental conflicts, that are the consequences of his altered position. The notion is ingenious, and if not overlayed with a certain dreamy mysticism, would be very interesting."

"I," said Dan, "would far rather hear of his acts

than his reflections. What he did would amuse me more to know than to learn why."

"But how easy to imagine the one!" exclaimed Raper. "Wealth has its habits all stereotyped; from Dives to our own days the catalogue has been ever the same, 'purple and fine linen.' And if some have added to the mere sensual pleasures the higher enjoyments derivable from objects of art and the cultivation of letters, has it not been because their own natures were more elevated, and required such refinements as daily necessaries? The humble man suddenly enriched, lives no longer in the sphere of his former associates, but ascends into one of whose habits he knows nothing; and Jean Paul condemns him for this, and reminds him that when a river is swollen by autumn rains, it does not desert its ancient channel, but enlarges the sphere of its utility, by spreading fertilisation on each side of it, seeming to think — I may, by the accidents of life, grow small and humble again; it is as well that I should not quit the tiny course I have followed in my humble fortunes."

"And do you agree with him?" asked Dan, more amazed by the enthusiasm of his companion, than by the theme that suggested it.

"I do so in everything; I speak, of course, as one who knows nothing of those ambitions by which wealthy men are encompassed; I am not in the position of one who has seen and felt these fascinations, and who emerges from his poverty to reassume a former station. Take the case of Mr. Curtis, for instance."

"What! old Curtis — Joe Curtis?" asked Dan, eagerly.

"Yes, Curtis, formerly of Meaghvalley. Well, if

his claim be as good as they suppose, he'll not only inherit the great Wicklow estates, but the western property so long in Chancery."

MacNaghten saw that Raper was pouring forth this knowledge without being conscious that he was making an important revelation, and gave a dry commonplace assent.

"Who can say what may not be his income?" exclaimed Raper, thoughtfully; "twenty thousand a-year, at the least."

"And his prospects are good, you say — his chances of success?"

"The marriage certificate of Noah Curtis and Eleanor Carew has been discovered, sir, and if the will of Fownes Carew be authentic, the case, I believe, is clear."

"What Carews were these?"

"The ancestors of Walter Carew, sir, whose estates now descend to the heirs of the female branch."

"And Curtis will inherit these?"

The tone in which Dan uttered these words so startled Raper, that he suddenly recovered his self-possession, and remembered how unguardedly he had related this mysterious piece of intelligence.

"When was this discovery made? — who chanced to trace this relationship between Curtis and the Carew family?" cried MacNaghten, in intense anxiety.

A signal from Raper suddenly suggested caution and reserve; but Dan, too much excited to attend to it, went on —

"Sir, never believe it! It is some infernal scheme concocted between Fagan and the lawyers. They have

put forward this wretched old man, half-witted as he is —"

A hand grasped Dan's arm as he said this — he turned, and there stood Curtis beside him!

"I've heard you both!" said the old man, drily. "To you, sir," said he to Raper, "I owe my thanks for a piece of welcome news; to you, MacNaghten, I feel grateful for all your candour!"

"Come, come, Curtis — be angry with me, if you will; but, for heaven's sake, do not lend yourself to these base plots and schemes. If there be a conspiracy to rob poor Walter's widow and her child, let not one of his oldest, best friends have any share in it."

"I'll maintain my rights, sir — be assured of that!" said Curtis, with a degree of resolution strangely different from his former manner. "Mr. MacNaghten's impression of my competence to conduct my own affairs may possibly be disparaging, but, happily, there is another tribunal which shall decide on that question. Raper, I'm going into town — will you accompany me? Mr. MacNaghten, I wish you a good morning." And with these words, he took Raper's arm, and retired, leaving Dan still standing, mute, overwhelmed, and thunderstruck.

CHAPTER XX.

Prosperity and Adversity.

WHAT I have heretofore mentioned of the events which followed immediately on my father's death, were all related circumstantially to me by MacNaghten himself, who used to dwell upon them with a most painfully accurate memory. There was not an incident,

however slight, there was not a scene of passing interest, that did not leave its deep impression on him; and, amid all the trials of his own precarious life, these were the events which he recurred to most frequently.

Poor fellow, how severely did he reproach himself for calamities that no effort of his could avert! How often has he deplored mistakes and errors which, though they perhaps hastened, by no means caused, the ruin that imperilled us. The simple fact was, that in his dread of litigation, from which almost all his own misfortunes had sprung, he endeavoured to conduct affairs which required the most acute and subtle intelligence to guide. He believed that good sense and good intentions would be amply sufficient to divest my father's circumstances of all embarrassment; and when, at last, he saw two claimants in the field for the property — immense, almost fabulous, demands from Fagan — and heard, besides, that no provision was made for my mother, whose marriage was utterly denied and disbelieved — then he appears to have lost all self-control altogether, and in his despair to have grasped at any expedient that presented itself. One day, addressing a confidential letter to Sir Carew O'Moore, whom he regarded as the rightful heir to the property; the next, adventuring to open relations with Curtis, through the mediation of Fagan. Every weak point in my mother's position became, of course, exposed by these fruitless communications; while, by his own change of purpose, he grew to be distrusted by each in turn.

It was a theme that he avoided speaking on; but, when questioned closely by me, he has owned that

Curtis exercised a kind of sway, a species of terror-like influence over him, that totally overcame him.

"That old, besotted, crazy intellect," said he, "appeared to have recovered freshness and energy with prosperity; and, animated with almost diabolical acuteness, to profit by every weakness of my own nature. Even Fagan, with all his practised craft, had to succumb to the shrewd and keen-witted powers of the old man; and Crowther owned that all his experience of life had not shown him his equal in point of intelligence."

A misanthropic bitter spirit gave him a vigour and energy that his years might have denied him; and there was a kind of vindictive power about him that withstood all the effects of fatigue and exhaustion.

The law had now begun its campaign in right earnest. There were two great issues to be tried at bar, and a grand question, involving any amount of intricacy, for the Chancery Court. The subject was the possession of a large estate, and every legal celebrity of the day was engaged by one side or the other. Of course such an event became the general topic of discussion in all circles, but more particularly in those wherein my father had once moved. Alas, for the popularity of personal qualities — how short-lived is it ever! Of the many who used to partake of his generous hospitality, and who benefited by his friendship, how few could now speak even charitably of his acts! Indeed, it would appear from the tone in which they spoke, that each, even the least observant or far-seeing, had long anticipated his ruin. Such absurd extravagance — such pretension! A house fit for a sovereign prince, and a retinue like that of royalty! And

then the daily style of living — endless profusion and waste. The "French connection" — none would say marriage — also had its share of reprobation. The kindly-disposed only affected to deplore and grieve over the unhappy mistake. The rigidly-right seemed to read in his own downfall a justice for a crime committed; while another section, as large as either, "took out" their indignation at his insolence in having dared to present her to the world as his wife!

And yet his once warm heart was scarcely cold when they said these things of him. And so it is to this day, and to this hour: the same code of morality exists, and the same set of moralisers are to be met with everywhere. Far be it from me to say that faults and follies should pass unnoticed and unstigmatised; but, at least, let the truth-teller of to-day not have been the tuft-hunter of yesterday — let the grave monitor who rebukes extravagance, not once have been the Sybarite guest who provoked excess — but least of all let us hear predictions of ruin from the lips that only promised long years of happiness and enjoyment.

Events moved rapidly. The Chancellor appointed a receivership over the property, and an order from the Court required that immediate possession should be taken of the house and demesne. My father's balance at his banker's amounted to some thousand pounds. This, too, was sequestered by a judge's order, "awaiting proceedings." An inventory of everything — even to the personal effects of my mother — the jewellery she had brought with her from France — her very wardrobe — was taken. The law has a most microscopic eye for detail. Carriages, horses, servants' liveries, were numbered — the very cradle

in which lay her baby, was declared to belong to some unknown owner; and a kind of mystical proprietorship seemed to float unseen through the chambers and corridors of that devoted dwelling.

My poor mother! — removed from room to room, with good-natured care, to spare her the shock of proceedings which even her ignorance of the world might have taken alarm at — weak, scarcely able to walk — only half conscious of the movement around her — asking every moment for explanations which none had courage to give her — agitated with vague terror — a sense of some misfortune lowering over her, and each moment nearer — catching at a chance word dropped here — eagerly watching at every look there — what misery, what suffering was yours! poor, friendless, forsaken widow!

Where was MacNaghten, her one faithful friend and counsellor? He had gone to town early that morning, and had not yet returned. One last but fruitless effort to induce Curtis to come to terms, had led him again to seek an interview. Her cousin De Gabriac, who had been ill for several days, had by a mere accident, from expressions picked up by his valet in the household, learned the nature of the allegation against my mother — that her marriage was denied, and my illegitimacy declared. Almost driven to madness by what sounded like an outrage to his pride, he had set out for Dublin to fasten upon some one — any one — a personal quarrel in the vindication of my mother's honour. Fagan's address was known to him, by frequent mention of his name, and thither he accordingly hastened. The Grinder was from home, but to await his return De Gabriac was ushered up

stairs into the drawing-room, where an elderly man was seated writing at a table. The old man lifted his head and slightly saluted the stranger, but continued his occupation without any further notice, and De Gabriac threw himself into a chair to wait, with what patience he could, for Fagan's coming.

There was a newspaper on the table, and De Gabriac took it up to spell as he could the intelligence of the day. Almost the very first lines which caught his eye, were an announcement of an "Extensive sale of valuable furniture, plate, and household effects, late the property of Walter Carew, Esq." Certain enigmatical words that headed the advertisement puzzled the foreigner, and unable to restrain his eagerness to unravel their meaning, he advanced to the table where the old man was writing, and in a polite tone asked him to explain what meant such phrases as "In re Joseph Curtis, Esq., of Meaghvalley House, and others, petitioners."

The other, thus addressed, looked from the newspaper to the inquirer, and back again to the paper, and then to the astonished face of the Frenchman, without a word. "I have to hope," said De Gabriac, "that nothing in my question may appear rude or uncivil. I merely wished to know —"

"To know who Joseph Curtis is!" broke in the old man, quickly. "Then I'll tell you, sir. He is the only surviving son of Robert Harrison Curtis and Eleanor Anne, his wife, born at Meaghvalley House, in the parish of Cappagh, barony of Ivrone, Anno Domini, 1704. Served in Parliament for twenty-eight years, and commanded the militia of his native county, till deprived of that honour by a rascally Government

and a perjured Viceroy." Here his voice grew loud, and his manner violent and excited. "Since when, sir, harassed, persecuted, and tortured, he has been robbed of his estates, stripped of his property, and left houseless and friendless — ay, sir, friendless I say, for poverty and want attract no friendship; and who would still be the victim of knavery and scoundrelism if Providence had not blessed him with a clear head as well as a strong heart. Such he is, and such he stands before you. And now, sir, that I have answered your question, will you favour me with a reply to mine — what are you called?"

"I am the Count Emile De Gabriac," said the Frenchman, smiling; "I will spare you the pedigree and the birthplace."

"Wisely done, I've no doubt, sir," said Curtis, "if, as I surmise, you are the relative of that French lady whom I met at Castle Carew."

"You speak of my cousin, sir — Madame de Carew."

"I do not recognise her as such, sir, nor does the law of this country."

"How do you mean, sir — not married — is it such you would imply?" cried De Gabriac, fiercely.

"Never imagine that your foreign airs can terrify me, young gentleman," said Curtis, insolently. "I've seen you in your own country, and know well the braggadocio style you can assume. If you ask me for information, do so with the manner that beseems inquiry. If you are for a quarrel, it's not Joe Curtis will baulk your good intentions."

"Poor old fool," said De Gabriac, contemptuously.

"If you had a grandson or a nephew to answer for your insolence — —"

"But, I have neither — I want neither; I am ready, willing, and able to defend my own honour, and this is exactly what I suspect you are unable to say."

"But you do not suppose that I can cross a weapon with the like of you!" said De Gabriac, with an insolent laugh.

"You wouldn't be a Frenchman if you hadn't a subterfuge to escape a meeting!" cried Curtis, with a most taunting impertinence of manner.

"This is pushing insolence too far, old man," said De Gabriac, barely able to restrain himself.

"And yet not far enough, it would seem, to prompt you to an act of manhood. Now hear me, Monsieur Count. I am no admirer of your country, nor its ways; but this I will say, that a French gentleman, so far as I have seen of them, was always ready to resent an insult; and, whenever a slight was passed by unnoticed, the presumption ever was, that he who endured it was not a gentleman. Is it to some such explanation you wish to conduct me in the present case?"

A contemptuous exclamation and a glance of ineffable disdain was all the reply the Count vouchsafed to this outrageous appeal, and probably by no means could he so effectually have raised the old man's anger. Any allusion to his age, to the infirmities that pertained to it, he bore always with the greatest impatience; but to suppose that his time of life placed him beyond self-vindication was an insult too great to be endured, and he would have braved any peril to avenge it. His sudden access to wealth, far from allaying the irritabilities of his nature, had increased and exaggerated

them all. The insolence of prosperity was now added to the querulous temperament that narrow fortune had engendered, and the excitement of his brain was little short of actual frenzy. To what extent of outrage passion might have carried him there is no saying, for he was already hurriedly advancing towards the Count when the door opened, and Polly Fagan entered. She had overheard from an adjoining room the words of high altercation, and recognising Curtis as one of the speakers, determined at any cost to interfere.

"I am sure, sir," said she, addressing the old man, while she curtsied deeply to the stranger, "that you will forgive my intrusion; but I only this moment learned that you were here writing, and I thought that probably the quiet seclusion of my room would suit you better — may I make bold to offer it to you?"

"Thanks, madam; but, with your leave, this is quite to my taste," said he, stiffly.

"It is so comfortable, sir, and looks out upon our little garden!" said Polly, coaxingly.

"I am certain, madam, that it has every attraction, and only needs your presence there to be incomparable."

"Nay, sir," said she, laughing, "I'll not take your inuendo save in its flattering sense."

"I never flatter, madam, for I wouldn't try to pass on another the base coinage I'd reject myself. Others, however," and here he glanced towards the Frenchman, "may not have these scruples; and I am sure the charms of your apartment will be fully appreciated elsewhere."

Polly blushed deeply, not the less so that the

Frenchman's eyes were bent upon her during the delivery of the speech with evident admiration.

"If mademoiselle would permit me, even as a sanctuary — —" began the Count.

"Just so, Miss Polly," broke in Curtis; "let him take refuge there, as he tells you, for he feels very far from at his ease in my company."

Polly's quick intelligence read in these few words the real state of the case; and, resolved at all hazards to prevent untoward consequences, she made a sign to the Frenchman to follow her, and left the room.

It was in vain that the old man re-seated himself at the writing table; all his efforts at composure were fruitless, and he muttered to himself threats of vengeance and imprecations, till he worked his mind up to a state of ungovernable fury. It was in the very paroxysm of this passion, and while he was pacing the chamber with hasty steps, that Fagan entered.

"Nothing unpleasant has occurred, sir, I trust," exclaimed the Grinder, as he beheld the agitated face, and watched the lips that never ceased to mutter unintelligibly.

"Tell me, sir," cried he, advancing up to Fagan, and placing one hand upon his shoulder, "tell me, sir, what is there in my age and appearance that should exclude me from exacting the satisfaction in vogue amongst gentlemen? I ask you, sir, in plain language — and you have a right to answer me, for it was in your house and under your roof that I have received this outrage — where and what is my disqualification?"

"Pray explain yourself, Mr. Curtis. I trust I haven't

heard you aright, and that any one had dared to offend you within these walls!"

"Yes, sir, in the very room where we stand, not half an hour ago, an insolent scoundrel of a foreigner — a French lackey — a hair-dresser, perhaps — has had the insolence to talk to me, a gentleman of fortune and position, a man whose estate places him in the first rank of this country's gentry. You said so yesterday. Don't deny it, sir, I quote your own very words."

"I am most ready and willing to repeat them, Mr. Curtis," said Fagan, humbly; "pray go on."

"You said yesterday," continued Curtis, "in the presence of two others, that except Lord Kiltimon's, there was not so large a property in the country; did you, sir, or did you not?"

"I certainly did say so, sir."

"And now, sir, you would go back of it — you had some reservation, some qualifying something or other, I'll be bound; but I tell you, Mr. Anthony Fagan, that though these habits may suit an apple-stall in Mary's-abbey, they are unbecoming when used in the presence of men of rank and fortune. I believe that is plain speaking, sir; I trust there may be no misconception of my meaning at least!"

Fagan was not, either by nature or by disposition, disposed to submit tamely to insult; but whether it was from some strong reason of policy, or that he held Curtis as one not fully responsible for his words, he certainly took no steps to resent his language, but rather seemed eager to assuage the violence of the old man's temper.

"It's all very well, sir," said Curtis, after listening with considerable show of impatience to these excuses; "it's all very well to say you regret this and deplore

that. But let me tell you there are other duties of your station beside apologies. You should take measures that when persons of my rank and station accept the shelter of your roof, they are not broken in upon by rascally foreigners, vile adventurers, and swindlers! You may be as angry as you please, sir, but I will repeat every word I have said. Yes, Mr. Fagan; I talk from book, sir — I speak with knowledge; for when you were serving out crab-apples, in a check-apron, at your father's stall, I was travelling on the Continent, as a young gentleman of fortune!"

"Until you tell me how you have been insulted, and by whom," said Fagan, with some warmth, "I must hope that there is some easily-explained mistake."

"Egad! this is better and better," exclaimed Curtis. "No, sir; you mistake me much — you entirely misunderstand me. I should most implicitly accept your judgment as to a bruised peach or a blighted pear; but upon a question of injured honour or of outraged feeling, I should scarcely defer to you so humbly!" and as he said these words, with an air of most exaggerated self-importance, he put on his hat, and left the room, without once noticing the respectful salutation of the Grinder.

When Fagan entered his daughter's room, he was surprised at the presence of the stranger, whom she presented to him as the Count de Gabriac, and who had so far profited by the opportunity as to have already made a most favourable impression upon the fair Polly.

Polly rapidly told her father that the stranger, while awaiting his return, had been accidentally exposed to the most outrageous treatment from Curtis, to shelter

him from a continuance of which she had offered him the hospitality of her own apartment.

"He came in," resumed she, "to learn some tidings of his cousin's affairs, for it appears that law proceedings of the most rigorous kind are in operation, and the poor widow will be obliged to leave Castle Carew."

Polly spoke with true feelings of regret, for she really now learned for the first time that my mother's position was involved in any difficulty, though from what precise cause she was still in ignorance.

"Leave me to speak with the Count alone, Polly; I can probably afford him the information he seeks."

The interview was not of long duration; but Fagan acquitted himself with a degree of tact and delicacy that scarcely seemed native to him. It is difficult to guess at his real motives in the matter. Perhaps he entertained some secret doubts that my mother's marriage might one day or other admit of proof; perhaps he felt some touch of gratitude for the treatment his daughter had experienced when a guest at Castle Carew. Indeed, he spoke of this to the Count with pride and satisfaction. Whatever the reasons, he used the greatest and most delicate reserve in alluding to my mother's situation, and told De Gabriac that the proceedings, however rigorous they might appear, were common in such cases, and that when my mother had sufficiently recovered herself to give detailed information as to the circumstances of her marriage, there would be ample time and opportunity to profit by the knowledge. He went even further, and suggested that for the present he wished to place his little cottage at the Killeries at her disposal, until such time as she could fix upon a

residence more to her taste. In fact, both his explanations and his offers were made so gracefully and so kindly, that De Gabriac assented at once, and promised to come to dinner on the following day, to complete all the arrangements.

When MacNaghten came to hear of the plan he was overjoyed, not only because it offered a home to my mother in her houseless destitution, but as evidencing a kind spirit on Fagan's part, from which he augured most favourably. In fact, the arrangement, while relieving them from all present embarrassment, suggested also future hope; and it was now determined, that while De Gabriac was to accompany my mother to the far west, Dan himself was to set out for France, with a variety of letters, which might aid him in tracing out the story of my father's marriage.

It was at an humble little hotel in Stafford-street, a quaint old house called "The Hart," that they passed the last evening together before separating. Polly Fagan came over to drink tea with my mother, and they chatted away in sombre mood till past midnight. MacNaghten was to sail with an early tide, and they agreed to sit up till it should be his time to depart. Often and often have I heard Dan speak of that evening. Every incident of it made an impression upon his memory quite disproportioned to their non-importance, and he has taken pains even to show me where each of them sat. The corner where my mother's chair stood is now before me, and I fancy I can bring up her pale young widow's face, tear-furrowed and sad, trying to look interested where, with all her efforts, her wandering thoughts were ever turning to the past,

and where by no exertion could she keep pace with those "who sorrowed not as she sorrowed."

"We did not dare to talk to her of the future," said poor MacNaghten; "her grief was too holy a thing to be disturbed by such thoughts; but amongst ourselves we spoke whisperingly of when we were all to meet again, and she seemed to listen to us with interest. It was strange enough," remarked he, "how sorrow had blended all our natures — differing and discordant, as heaven knows they were — into some resemblance of a family. I felt towards Polly as though she had been my sister, and totally forgot that Gabriac belonged to another land and another people; so humanising is the touch of affliction!"

It struck three; and at four o'clock Dan was to sail. As he stood up, he caught sight of my mother, and saw that her eyes were full of tears. She made a signal to him to approach, and then said, in a fervent whisper, —

"Come and see him before you go;" and led the way to the adjoining room, where her baby lay asleep. "I know," said she, in broken accents, "that you will be a friend to him always, but if aught were to befall you! —"

MacNaghten cast his eyes heavenward, but made no answer.

"Yes," cried she, "I have that hope;" and so saying, she knelt down beside the little cot to pray.

"It was odd," said he, when telling me this, "I had never heard words of prayer in the French language before; but they struck upon my heart with a power and significance I cannot explain. Was it some strange inward consciousness of the power of Him before whom

I was standing, and who knows every tongue and every people, and to whom all hearts are open, let their accents be ever so unlike or so various? I was in the street," added he, "without knowing how I came there, for my brain was turning with a thousand thoughts.

"'Where to, sir?' said the carman.

"'The Pigeon-house,' said I, seating myself on the vehicle.

"'Aint you Mr. MacNaghten, sir?' asked a large, well-dressed man, in a civil voice, as he touched his hat respectfully to me.

"'That is my name,' replied I.

"'Mr. Daniel MacNaghten, of Garrah-lynn?' asked he again.

"'When I owned it,' rejoined I, trying to smile at a sad recollection.

"'Then I have a writ against you, sir,' continued he, 'and I'm sorry I must execute it too.'

"'At whose suit, and for what sum?' asked I, trying to be calm and collected. He answered my last question first, by saying it was for an acceptance for twelve hundred and seventy-six pounds odd; and, after a little pressing, added, —

"'At the suit of Joseph Curtis, Esq., of Meagh-valley House.'

"'What's to be done?' said I, 'I cannot pay it.'

"'Come over to Green Street for the present, anyhow,' said he civilly; 'there are plenty of houses.'

"'No, no; to jail, if I must,' said I, boldly. 'It's not myself I was thinking about.'

"Just as day was breaking I passed into the prison; and when I thought to be looking upon the mountains of the bay slowly fading behind me, I was ushered

into the debtors' yard, to wait till my future dwelling-place should be assigned me."

I copy this incident in the very words he himself related it.

CHAPTER XXI.

At Rest.

HAVING already acquainted my reader with the source from which I have derived all these materials of my family history, he will not be surprised to learn that MacNaghten's imprisonment leaves a blank in this part of my narrative. All that I know indeed of these early years can be told in a few lines. My mother repaired with me to the cottage in the Killeries, to which also came De Gabriac shortly after, followed by Polly Fagan, whose affection for my mother now exhibited itself most remarkably. Not vainly endeavouring to dam up the current of a grief that would flow on, she tried to interest my mother in ways and by pursuits which were totally new to her, and, consequently, not coupled which painful recollections. She taught her to visit the poor in their cabins — to see them in the hard struggle of their poverty, stoutly confronting fortune day by day, carrying the weary load of adversity, without one hope as to the time when they might cease to labour and be at rest. These rambles through wild and unvisited tracts rewarded them well in the grand and glorious objects of scenery with which they became acquainted. It was everlasting discovery — now of some land-locked little bay, half-hid among its cliffs; now some lone island, with its one family for inhabitants; or now some picturesque bit of inland

scenery, with wood and mountain, and waving grass. Occasionally, too, they ventured out to sea, either to creep along the coast, and peep into the rocky caverns with which it is perforated; or, they would set sail for the distant islands of Arran — bleak and desolate spots on the wide, wild ocean. The charms of landscape, in its grandest features, were, however, the least of the benefits these excursions conferred, at least on my poor mother. She learned, then, to see and to feel that the sorrows of life fall uniformly — that few, indeed, are singled out for especial suffering, and that the load is apportioned to the strength that is to bear it. She saw, besides, how the hard necessities of existence formed in themselves a barrier against the wearing influence of grief; the hands that must labour for daily bread are not wrung in the wild transports of misery! It is the law of human nature, and the claims of the living are the counterpoise to the memory of the dead.

Neither her early education nor her habits disposed her to any exertion. All her ideas of life were circumscribed within the limits of certain pleasures and enjoyments. From her infancy she had never known any other care than how to make time pass swiftly and agreeably: now she had to learn the more rewarding lesson, that life can be profitably passed, and to this task she addressed herself, I believe, with a hearty earnestness.

It is only by estimating the change which took place in her character at this time, and which marked it during the short remainder of her life, that I am led to speculate upon the cause. Her days were passed in intercourse with the peasantry, whom, at last, she began

to understand, through all the difficulties of their strange temperament, and all the eccentricities of their habits. There was not a cabin for miles round, with every one of whose inmates she was not acquainted, and of whose joys and sorrows, whose hopes and cares, she was not, in some shape, the participator.

When the sea was too rough, and the weather too wild for the fishermen to venture out, she was constantly amongst them with some material for home occupation; and it was curious to see those fingers, which had never been used to harder toil than the mock labour of the embroidery frame, ingeniously moving through the mazes of a fishing-net, while, in her foreign English, she would relate some story of her Breton countrymen, certain to interest those who sat admiringly around her.

How singular it is that the experience and the habits which are destined to guide us through the great trials of life are frequently acquired in scenes and amongst people the very opposite to those wherein the lesson is to be profitable! And yet so it was. In exhorting and cheering others she elevated the tone of her own mind; in suggesting exertion to the faint-hearted she imbibed courage herself; and when teaching them to be of good cheer, she spoke the language of encouragement to herself. Her bodily health, too, kept pace with her mental. She who rarely had ventured out if the weather merely were threatening, could now face the stormiest seasons of that wild west. The darkest day of winter would see her abroad, braving, with an almost childish excitement, the beating rain and wind, or fighting onward to some lone cabin amongst the hills, through sleet and snow-drift, undeterred!

I have heard but little of the life they led within doors, but I believe that the evenings were passed pleasantly with books and conversation — De Gabriac reading aloud, while my mother and Polly worked; and thus the winter glided easily over, and spring was now approaching ere they were well aware that so many months had gone by. If my mother wondered at times why they never heard from MacNaghten, De Gabriac and Polly, who were in the secret of his mishap, would frame various excuses to account for his silence. Meanwhile they heard that such was the complication of the law proceedings which concerned the estate, so intricate the questions, and so puzzling, that years might pass in litigation ere any decision could be come to. A reserved offer came at this time from Sir Carew O'Moore, to settle some small annuity on my mother if she would relinquish all claim to the estate in his favour; but Fagan hesitated to acquaint her with a proposal which he well knew she would reject, and the very fact of which must be an insult to her feelings. This the Grinder commented on in a letter to his daughter, while he also avowed that as he saw no prospect of anything favourable to my mother likely to issue from the course of law, he must press upon her the necessity of her seeking an asylum in her own country, and amongst her own friends.

I have never been able to ascertain why my mother herself did not at once determine on returning to France after my father's death. Perhaps the altered circumstances of her fortune deterred her. There might have been reasons, perhaps, on the score of her birth. My impression is, that De Gabriac had quitted the Continent overwhelmed with debt, and dared not re-

turn there, and that as his counsels greatly swayed her, she was influenced by whatever arguments he adduced.

So little was my mother acquainted with the details of her altered condition in life, that she still believed a small but secure income remained to her; and it was only by a few lines addressed to her, and inclosed in a letter to Polly, that she was at length brought to see that she was actually without means of support for a single day, and that hitherto she had been a dependent on Fagan's kindness for a home.

I believe that this communication was not made with any harshness or want of feeling; on the contrary, that it was conveyed with whatever delicacy the writer could summon to so ungracious a task. It is more than probable, besides, that Fagan would not have made it at all, or at least not for a considerable time, had he not at that moment been involved in an angry correspondence with Polly, who had flatly refused to quit my mother, and return home. Irritated at this, and driven to extremities, he had determined in this last course to accomplish his object.

My mother was so much overwhelmed by the tidings, that she thought she could not have understood them aright, and hastened to Polly's room, with the letter in her hand.

"Tell me," cried she, "what this means — is it possible — can it be true — that I am actually a beggar?"

Polly read the lines with a flashing eye and heightened colour, but never uttered a word.

"Speak, Polly, dearest, and relieve me of this

terrible fear, if you can," cried my mother, passionately.

"I understand what this means," said Polly, crushing the note in her hand; "this is a question that requires explanation. You must leave it to me. I'll go up to town this evening, and before the end of the week I'll be back with you. My father is mistaken — that's all; and you have misunderstood him!"

And thus planning, and excusing, and contradicting herself, she at last succeeded in allaying my mother's fears, and assuring her that it was a mere misapprehension, and that a few days would suffice to rectify it.

My mother insisted that Polly should not travel alone, and that Gabriac should be her companion — an arrangement to which she acceded with comparative ease and willingness. Had Polly Fagan and Gabriac merely met as people meet in society, with no other opportunities of knowing each other than are presented by the ordinary intercourse with the world, the great likelihood is, that they should have conceived for each other a rooted dislike. There was scarcely one single subject on which they thought in common. They differed in ideas of country and people. Their tastes, their prejudices, their ambitions, all took opposite directions; and yet such is the effect of intimacy, such the consequence of daily, hourly communion, that each not only learned to tolerate, but even to imbibe some of the notions of the other; and an imperceptible compromise was at length entered into, by which individuality became tempered down, and even the broad traits of nationality almost effaced. The Count came to perceive, that what he had at first regarded as

coarse and inelegant, was in reality the evidence of only a bold and vigorous spirit, exulting in its own energy, and confident of its power; and Polly began to recognise that remarkable truth, that a coxcomb need not necessarily be a coward, and that the most excessive puppyism can consort with even a chivalrous courage and daring. Of these qualities — the very first in Polly's estimation — he had given several proofs in their adventures by sea and land, and under circumstances, too, where the very novelty of the peril to be surmounted might have suggested some fear.

There is a generous impulse usually to exalt in our esteem those whom we had once held cheaply, when on nearer intimacy we discover that we had wronged them. We feel as if there was a debt of reparation due to them, and that we are unjust till we have acquitted it. It may chance that now and then this honourable sentiment may carry us beyond reasonable bounds, and that we are disposed to accord even more than is due to them.

I have no means of knowing if such were the case here: I can but surmise from other circumstances the causes which were in operation. It is enough, however, if I state, that long before Gabriac had passed the limit of admiration for Polly, she had conceived for him a strong sentiment of love; and while he was merely exerting those qualities which are amongst the common gifts of his class and his country, she was becoming impressed with the notion of his vast superiority to all of those she had ever met in society. It must be taken into account, that his manner towards her evinced a degree of respect and devotion which, though

not overpassing the usual observance of good manners in France, contrasted very favourably with the kind of notice bestowed by country gentlemen upon "the Grinder's daughter." Those terrible traditions of exorbitant interest, those fatal compacts with usury, that had made Fagan's name so dreadfully notorious in Ireland, were all unknown to Gabriac. He only saw in Polly a very handsome girl, of a far more than common amount of intelligence, and with a spirit daringly ambitious. As the favoured friend and companion of his cousin, he took it for granted that the peculiar customs of Ireland admitted such intimacies between those socially unequal, and that there was nothing strange or unusual in seeing her where she was. He, therefore, paid her every attention he would have bestowed on the most high-born damsel of his own court. He exhibited that deference which his own language denominated homage; and in fact, long before he had touched her affections, he had flattered her pride and self-love by a courtesy to which she had never, in all her intercourse with the world, been habituated.

Perhaps my reader needs not one-half of the explanation, to surmise why two young people — both good-looking, both attractive, and both idle — should, in the solitude of a country cottage, fall in love with each other. That they did so, at all events — she first, and he afterwards — is, however, the fact; and now, by the simple-hearted arrangement of my poor mother — whose thoughts had never taken in such a casualty — were they to set off together as fellow-travellers for Dublin. So far, indeed, from even suspecting such a possibility, it was only a few days previously that she had been deploring to Polly her cou-

sin's fickleness in breaking off his proposed marriage in France, on the mere ground that his absence must necessarily have weakened the ties that bound him to his betrothed. What secret hopes the revelation may have suggested to Polly's mind is matter that I cannot even speculate on.

It was with a heavy heart my poor mother saw them drive from the door, and came back to sit down in solitude beside the cradle of her baby. It was a dark and rainy day of winter; the beating of the waves against the rocky shore, and the wailing winds, made sad chorus together; and without, as well as within, all was cheerless and depressing. Dark and gloomy as was the landscape, it was to the full as bright as the scene within her own heart; for now that she began to arrange facts and circumstances together, and to draw inferences from them, she saw that nothing but ruin lay before her. The very expressions of Fagan's letter, so opposite to the almost submissive courtesy of former times, showed her that he no longer hesitated to declare her the dependent on his bounty. "And yet," cried she, aloud, "are these the boasted laws of England? Is the widow left to starve? — is the orphan left houseless, except some formality or other be gone through? To whom descends the heritage of the father, while the son is still living?" From these thoughts, which no ingenuity of hers could pierce, she turned to others not less depressing. What had become of all those who once called themselves her husband's friends? She, it is true, had herself lived estranged and retired from the world, but Walter was everywhere — all knew him, all professed to love him. Bitter as ingratitude will ever seem, all its poignancy

is nothing compared to the smart it inflicts when practised towards those who have gone from us for ever; we feel then as though treachery had been added to the wrong. "Oh!" cried she, in her anguish, "how have they repaid him whose heart and hand were ever open to them!" A flood of recollections, long dammed up by the habits of her daily life, and the little cares by which she was environed, now swept through her mind, and from her infancy and her childhood, in all its luxurious splendour, to her present destitution, each passage of her existence seemed revealed before her. The solitude of the lonely cottage suggesting such utter desolation, and the wild and storm-lashed scene without adding its influence to her depression, she sat for some time still and unmoved, like one entranced; and then springing to her feet, she rushed out into the beating rain, glad to exchange the conflict of the storm for that more terrible war that waged within her.

Like one flying from some terrific enemy, she ran with all her speed towards the shore. The sea was now breaking over the rocks with tremendous force, and sending vast clouds of spray high into the air, while whole sheets of foam were wildly tossed about by the wind. Through these she struggled on; now stumbling or falling, as her tender feet yielded to the sharp rocks, till she reached a little promontory over the sea, on which the waves struck with all their force; and there, with streaming hair and dripping garments, she sat braving the hurricane, and in a wild paroxysm of imagined heroism, daring Fortune to her worst.

Physical ills are as nothing to those that make the

heart their dwelling-place, and to her there seemed an unspeakable relief in the thundering crash of the storm, as compared with the desolate silence of her lonely house.

The whole of that day saw her on the self-same spot; and there was she discovered at nightfall by some fishermen, propped up in a crevice of the rock, but cold and scarcely conscious. They all knew her well, and with the tenderest care they carried her to her cottage. Even before they reached it her mind began to wander, and wild and incoherent words dropped from her. That same night she was seized with fever; the benevolent but simple people about her knew not what to do; the nearest medical aid was many miles off; and when it did arrive, on the following morning, the malady had already attacked the brain.

The same sad short series of events so many have witnessed, so many have stood by, with breaking hearts, now occurred. To wild delirium, with all its terrible excesses, succeeded the almost more dreadful stupor; and to that again the brief lucid moment of fast-ebbing life; and then came the sleep that knows no waking — and my mother was at rest!

CHAPTER XXII.

The Village of Reichenau.

I MUST now ask of my reader to clear at a bound both time and space, and stand beside me some years later, and in a foreign land.

The scene is at the foot of the Splügen Alps, in a little village begirt with mountains, every crag and eminence of which is surmounted by a ruined castle.

There is a grandeur and solemnity in the whole landscape, not alone from its vast proportions, but from the character of impregnability suggested by those fastnesses and the grey sad-coloured tint of hill and verdure around.

There is barely space for the village in the narrow glen, which is traversed by two streams — the one, yellow, turbid, and sluggish; the other, sparkling, bright, and impetuous. These are the Rhines, which, uniting below the village of Reichenau, form that noble river whose vine-clad cliffs and castled crags are lyrical in every land of Europe.

I scarcely know a spot throughout the whole Continent more typical of isolation and retirement than this. There is no entrance to it from the north, save by a wooden bridge over the torrent; towards the south it is only accessible by the winding zig-zag of the "Via Mala;" east and westward rise gigantic mountains untraversed by even the chamois-hunter, and yet there is no appearance of that poverty and destitution so usually observable in remote and unvisited tracts. Many of the houses are large and substantially built, some evince a little architectural pretension in the way of ornament, and one which occupies a little terrace above the river has somewhat the air of a chateau, and in its windowed roof and moated gardens shows that it aspired to the proud distinction of a seignorial residence.

It might be difficult to ascertain how an edifice of this size and pretension came to be built in such a place; at the time I speak of it was a school, and a modest-looking little board affixed to a pear-tree at the gate, announced "The Academy of M. Jost." In my

boyish eyes, this chateau, its esplanade above the stream, the views it embraced, and the wild, luxuriant orchard by which it was begirt, comprised an amount of magnificence and beauty, such as no stretch of imagination could surpass. In respect to its picturesque site, my error was probably not great; the mountain scene, in all its varied tints of season and sunlight, is still before me, nor can I remember one whose impression is more pleasing.

The chateau, for so it was called, lost nothing in my estimation by any familiarity with its details. I only knew of the large school-room with its three windows that opened on the terrace, the smaller chamber where the classical teacher held his more select audience, and a little den, fitted up with cases of minerals, insects, and stuffed birds, which was denominated M. Jost's cabinet, and where that worthy man sat, weeks, months, I believe years long, microscope in eye, examining the intricate anatomy of beetles, or poring over some singular provisions in the eyelids of moths. Save when "brought up" for punishment, we rarely saw him. Entirely engrossed with his own pursuits, he seldom bestowed a thought upon us; and when, by any untoward incident, such as I have alluded to, we were thrust into his notice, the presence of a strange-looking butterfly — a brilliant dragon-moth — a spider even, would be certain to divert his thoughts into a new channel, and ourselves and our derelictions be utterly forgotten. Need I say, that no culprit ever appeared in the dock without some such recommendation to mercy, nor was there one of us ever unprepared with some specimen of the insect tribe, ready to be produced at any moment of emergency?

It is but fair to say, that the other masters — there were but two — were singularly forbearing and indulgent. M. Gervois, who "taught" the little boys, was a quaint-looking, venerable old gentleman, with a queue, and who wore on fête-days a ribbon in his button-hole. He was, it was said, originally a French noble of large fortune, but who had lost everything by the extravagance of an only son, and had sought out, in voluntary exile, this remote spot to end his days in. His manners were always marked with a tinge of proud reserve which none ever infringed upon, nor, out of school-hours, did any one ever presume to obtrude upon his retirement.

The classical teacher was a foreigner, we knew not of what nation; we called him sometimes a Pole, now a Spaniard, now an Irishman — for all these nationalities only to us expressed distant and unknown lands. He was small, almost to dwarfishness, and uniformly dressed in a suit of peculiarly-coloured brown cloth; his age might have been fifty, sixty, or even more, for there was little means of deciphering the work of time in a face sad and care-worn, but yet unwrinkled, and where sorrow had set its seal in early life, but without having worn the impress any deeper by time. Large spectacles of blue glass concealed his eyes, of which the story ran, one was sightless; and his manner was uniformly quiet and patient — extending to every one the utmost limit of forbearance, and accepting the slightest efforts to learn as evidences of a noble ambition. To myself he was more than generous — he was truly and deeply affectionate. I was too young to be one of his class, but he came for me each morning to fetch me to the school, for I did

not live at the chateau, but at a small two-storied house abutting against the base of the mountain. There we lived; and, now, let me explain who we were.

But a peep within our humble sitting-room will save both of us much time. I have called it humble — I might have used a stronger word, for it was poor almost to destitution. The wooden chairs and tables; the tiled floor; the hearth, on which some soaked branches of larch are smoking; the curtainless window, as well as the utter absence of even the very cheapest appliances of comfort, — all show indigence. While a glance at the worn form and hollow cheek of her who now bends over the embroideryframe attests that actual want of sustenance is there written. Haggard and thin as the features are, it needs no effort to believe that they once constituted beauty of a high order. The eye, now sunken and almost colourless, was once flashing in its brilliancy; and that lip, indrawn and bloodless, was full and rounded like that of a Grecian statue. Even yet, amidst all the disfigurement of a coarse dress, the form is graceful, and every motion and gesture indicate a culture that must have been imbibed in a very different sphere.

How I have her before me at this instant, as, hearing my childish footstep at the door, she pulls the string to admit me, and then, turning from her frame, kneels down to kiss me! Monsieur Joseph, for so is the Latin master called, stands just within the doorway, as if waiting to be invited to come further.

"And how has he been to-day — a good boy?" asks she.

M. Joseph smiles, and nods his head.

"I'm glad of it; Jasper will always behave well. He will know that to do right is a duty, and a duty

fulfilled is a blessing. What says M. Gervois — is he content too?"

"Quite so," I reply. "He said I knew my hymn perfectly; and that if I learned the two pages that he showed me, off by heart, I should be made 'élite' of my class."

"And what will that be?"

"I shall be above them all, and they must salute me when we meet out of school, and in play hours."

"Let them do so in affection, but not for coercion, Jasper; he who is cleverer than his fellows ought to be humbler, if he would be as happy."

"Quite true, Polly; quite true: you never said anything more just. The conscious power of intellect tells its possessor of his weakness as well as of his strength. Jasper, my child, be humble."

"But when I said humble," broke he in again, "I meant in self-esteem, for there is a kind of pride that sustains and elevates us."

Mons. Joseph only sighed gently, but never spoke.

After a few words like these, I was usually dismissed to my play-room, a little corner eked out of an old tower which had been accidentally joined to the house after it was built, but which to me was a boon unspeakable, for it was all my own; but can I revel in the delight of that isolation which each afternoon saw me enjoy? I would briefly tell my reader, if so be that he need the information, that she who in that worn attire bends over her task, is Polly Fagan, and that Mons. Joseph is no other than our old acquaintance Joe Raper!

De Gabriac had married Polly secretly, Joe Raper alone being admitted to their confidence. For months

long they had watched for some favourable opportunity of breaking the event to the old man; and at last, worn out by care and anxiety, Polly could refrain no longer, but made the avowal herself, and, in a few brief words, told her fault and her sorrow.

The Grinder heard her with the stern impassiveness that he ever could summon in any dread emergency. He had that species of courage that can surmount every peril, only let its full extent be known; and although it was true that the announcement of the loss of all he was worth in the world would have been lighter tidings than those he now listened to, he heard her to the end without interruption. There was that in his calm, cold face, which smote her to the very heart — the very way he drew back his hand, as she tried to grasp it in her own, was a shock to her; and, ere she finished her sad story, her voice was broken, and her lips tremulous.

Terrible conflict was it between father and child! between two natures, each proud as the other — each bold, stern, and unforgiving!

"The date of this event?" asked he, as she concluded.

"The ninth of October."

"Where?"

"At a chapel in Cullenswood-avenue."

"Who witnessed it?"

"Raper."

"Any other?"

"No other."

"The ninth of October fell on a Tuesday; it was then, or the day after, that I gave you a diamond clasp, a present?"

"It was."

"Who performed this ceremony?"

"A priest, but I am not at liberty to tell his name; at least, without the assurance of your forgiveness."

"Then do not tell it! The man is still living?"

"I believe so."

"And your husband — where is he?"

"In the city. He is waiting but to be received by you ere he return to France to arrange his affairs in that country."

"He need not long delay his departure, then — tell him so."

"You forgive us, then?" cried she, almost bursting with gratitude.

"No! — never!"

"Not forgive us! — not acknowledge us!"

"Never! never!" reiterated he, with a thick utterance, that sounded like the very concentration of passion. The words seemed to have a spell in them to conjure up a feeling in her who heard, as deeply powerful as in him who spoke them.

"Am I no longer your daughter, sir?" asked she, rising and drawing herself to her full height before him.

"You are a Countess, madam," said he, with a scornful irony; "I am but an humble man, of obscure station and low habits. I know nothing of nobility, nor of its ways."

"I ask again, do you disown me?" said she, with a voice as calm and collected as his own.

"For ever, and ever," said he, waving his hand, as though the gesture was to be one of adieu. "You are mine no longer — you had ceased to be so ere I

knew it. Go to your home, if you have one; here, you are but an intruder — unasked, unwished for!"

"Bitter words to part with! but hear me, sir. He who has joined his lot to mine should not pay the penalty of my fault. Against him you can bear no malice — he at least does not merit the reproach you have cast on me. Will you see him — may he speak with you?"

"Whenever he pleases — provided it be but once. I will not be importuned."

"You will bear in mind, sir, that he is a man of birth and station, and that to his ears words of insult are a stranger."

"I will treat him with all the deference I owe to his rank, and to the part he has performed towards myself," said Fagan, slowly.

"It were, perhaps, better then that you should not meet?"

"It were, perhaps, better so!"

"Good-bye, sir. I have no more to say."

"Good-bye, madam. Tell Raper I want to speak to him as you pass out."

With Raper the interview was briefer still. Fagan drily informed his old follower that he no longer needed his services. And although Joe heard the words as a criminal might have listened to those of his last sentence, he never uttered a syllable. Fagan was brief, though bitter. He reproached him with the long years he had sheltered him beneath his roof, and reviled him for ingratitude! He spoke of him as one who had eaten the bread of idleness and repaid an existence of ease by treachery. Once, and only once, did the insulting language he lavished on him seem to

sting him beyond further endurance. It was when Fagan said, —

"You think me in your power, sir; you fancy that amid that mass of rubbish and confusion my affairs have been involved in, that you alone can be the guide. But I tell you here now, that were it even so, I'd rather heap them on the fire, and stand forth a beggar to the world, than harbour within my doors a man like you!"

The struggle that it cost poor Joe to hear this, without reply, was great; but a sense of the deference that throughout a long life he had ever rendered to his master, overpowered all considerations of self. He, indeed, felt that he had been wronged; he knew all the injustice of the reproach; but he also bethought him of the many years in which that house had been his home, and that hearth his own. He was not one to remember what he had rendered in return, nor think of the long existence of toil by which he had earned his livelihood. The settled humility, which was the basis of his whole character, made him esteem himself as one whose station excluded all thought of those relations that exist between members of the same community; and that his conduct should be arraigned, argued that his acts possessed a degree of importance he had never attributed to them.

He heard Fagan therefore, throughout, without any effort at reply; and, heaving a faint sigh, withdrew.

I have no means of knowing how Gabriac behaved in this trying emergency. All that I have heard came from Raper; and poor Joe was neither shrewd in his observation of character, nor quick to appreciate mo-

tives. The Count decided at once on a return to the Continent; perhaps he thought there might arise some chance of reconciliation with the father, if Polly, for a time at least, were withdrawn from his sight — perhaps, too, some hope there might be of arrangement of his own affairs. Raper was also to accompany them, in the prospect of finding some clerkship in an office, or some employment in a mercantile house abroad, where his knowledge of languages might be available. At all events, his protection and companionship would be useful to Polly, whenever the Count would be compelled to absent himself from home; and, lastly, the funds for the enterprise were all supplied by Joe, who contributed something under four hundred pounds, the savings of a whole life of labour!

As for Polly, to the humblest ornament she had ever worn, to the meanest gift she had received in childhood — she left all behind her. Her jewels were worth some thousands — her wardrobe was even splendid; but she went forth without a gem, and with barely what sufficed her in dress.

"And what is this?" said the Count, half disdainfully touching with his foot what seemed to be an oblong basket of coloured straw.

"Poor Josephine's baby!" said Polly, with eyes swimming in tears.

"And is he, is she — whichever it be — to form one of the party?" asked he, angrily.

"Can you ask it, Emile? You remember the last words she ever spoke to us on the morning we left the Killeries."

"That unlucky journey!" muttered he; but fortunately not loud enough for her to catch the words.

"The little fellow will soon be able to walk, and to mutter some words; he will be company for me when you are away!" said she, sorrowfully.

"L'Ami Joseph ought to fill up that void," said De Gabriac, laughing. "I think myself the very paragon of husbands to accede to the arrangement!"

Strange words were these for her to hear — nor, indeed, could she penetrate their meaning; but Polly's cares at that moment gave little time for thought, for every detail of preparation was left to her. Raper, it is true, did his utmost to aid her, but already De Gabriac had assumed a manner of superiority and command towards Joe, which greatly embarrassed Polly, and compelled her to use every means of keeping them apart.

Thus were they started on the sea of life — does it need much foresight to predict the voyage?

CHAPTER XXIII.

A Mountain Adventure.

Why do we all refer to the period of boyhood as one of happiness? It is not that it had not its own sorrows, nor that they were really so light — it is simply because it was the season of hope. In after-life, as deception after deception has checked us — when disappointment has dulled expectancy, we become more practical, less dreamy, and, alas! less happy. The possible and the probable of youth are not the possible and the probable of manhood, still less those of riper age. The realms of boyish fancy are as wide as the great ocean; and we revel in them in all the plenitude of unrestricted power. There is not a

budding effort of intellect that we do not magnify to ourselves as the origin of future distinction. We exalt our feats of strength and courage into deeds of heroic daring; and we fancy that the little struggles and crosses we meet with are like the great trials and reverses of after-life; and, in our pride of success, we deem ourselves conquerors. Oh! for one day — for even one short hour of that time of glorious delusions! Oh! that I could once more look out upon the world, as one gazes at a sunset at sea, wondering what beauteous lands lie afar off in the distance, and imagining the time when we should be journeying towards them — buoyant — high-hearted — hopeful! Who has ever achieved any success that equalled his boyish ambitions? Who has ever been as great or as good as his early visions have pictured him?

I have already told my reader that my youth was not passed in affluence. Our means were limited to the very merest requirements of existence — our food and our clothing were humble as our dwelling; and I believe that many a sore privation was needed to escape the calamity of debt. Of all these hardships I knew nothing at the time — my experience pointed out none who seemed to possess an existence happy as my own. I had all that unvarying affection and devoted love could bestow. My little turret in winter, the fields and the mountains in summer, made up a glorious world full of interest; and the days seemed never long enough for all my plans of pleasure.

I had no companions of my own age, nor did I feel the want of them; for when my school-hours were over I was free to follow the caprices of my own fancy. There was in my isolation a sort of independ-

ence that I gloried in. To be alone with my own day-dreams — my own ambitious hopes — my own high-soaring thoughts — was an ecstasy of delight that I would not have exchanged for any companionship. The very indulgence of these humours soon rendered me unsuited for association with others, whose ideas and habits appeared to me to be all vain, and trifling, and contemptible. The books of travel and discovery which I loved to read, had filled my mind with those stories of adventure which attend the explorer of unknown lands — the wonders of scenery, and the strange pictures of life and people. There was in the career itself, that blending of heroism and philanthropy — that mingled courage and humanity, which appealed to my heart by its very strongest sympathies; and I felt for these noble and devoted adventurers not less admiration than love. All my solitary rambles through the wild valleys of the neighbourhood — all my lonely walks over mountains, were in imitation of these wanderers, whose hardships I envied, and whose perils I longed to share. Not a rugged crag nor snow-capped summit that I did not name after some far-away land; and every brook and rippling stream became to me the Nile, the Euphrates, or the Ganges. The desolate character of the scenery amidst which we lived — the wide tracts of uninhabited country, favoured these illusions; and for whole days long not an incident would occur to break the spell which fancy had thrown around me.

My kind mother — for so Polly always taught me to call her — seemed to take delight in favouring these self-delusions of mine, and fell readily into all my caprices about locality. She made me, too, with her

own hands, a little knapsack to wear; bought me an iron-shod staff, such as Alpine travellers carry; and made me keep a kind of journal of these wanderings, noting down all my accidents and adventures, and recording even the feelings which beset me when afar off and alone in the mountains. So intent did I become at last on these imaginings, that the actual life of school and its duties grew to seem visionary and unreal, and my true existence to be that when wandering through the lonely valleys of the Alps, or sitting in solitude in some far away gorge of the mountains.

As I grew older I pushed my journeys further, and carried my explorings to the very foot of the Splügen, through that dreariest of all mountain passes, the "Verlohrnes Loch." The savage grandeur of this desolate spot — its gloom, its solitude, its utter desertion, its almost uninhabitable character, gave it a peculiar attraction in my eyes, for there nothing ever occurred to dispel the colourings of my imagination. There I revelled at will, amidst the wildest flights of my fancy. An old castle, one of the many feudal remains of this tract of country, stood upon a lone crag in the centre of the valley. It seemed as if Nature herself had destined the rock for such a structure, for while there was barely space sufficient at the top, the approach lay by a zig-zag path, rugged and dangerous, cut in the solid granite. When I first saw this rude old tower, the melting snows of early summer had flooded a small rivulet at the base of the crag, and the stream being divided in its course against the rock, swept along on either side, leaving the castle, as it were, on an island.

I had long resolved to scale this cliff, the view from

the summit of which I knew would be magnificent, extending for miles both up and down the valley; and, at last, took advantage of my first holiday from school to accomplish my purpose. The Forlorn Glen, as the translation of the name would imply, lay about thirteen miles away by taking the mountain paths, though its distance by road was more than double, and to go and return in the same day required an early start. I set out before day-break, having packed my knapsack with food to last me while I should be away.

I never remember to have felt a greater degree of exhilaration than as I set forth that morning. It was in the month of June, that season of all others the most beautiful in Alpine scenery, since it combines all the charms of spring with the balmy air and more genial atmosphere of summer. The cherry-trees were all in blossom in the glens, and the rich pink of the apricot peeped out from many a little grove. I went along, happy and light-hearted, passing many a spot to which I had given some name of a far-away scene, and recognising places which once had been to me the utmost limits of my wanderings. So, thought I, shall it be in after-life, and we can look back upon efforts that we once deemed stupendous, and regard them as mere tiny steps in the great steep we are climbing.

I breakfasted at a little waterfall in the midst of the wildest mountain, not a sound save the plashing waters to break the stillness; the birds gathered round me for the crumbs of my meal, and ate them within a few paces of where I sat. There was something that I felt as indescribably touching, in the trustfulness of the humbler creation, in scenes deserted and forsaken of

men; and musing on the theme, I arose and pursued my way.

When I reached the Verlohrnes Loch it was still early, and I was delighted to find that the stream at the foot of the castle rock was dwindled down to a mere rivulet, and fordable with ease. I crossed, and at once began the ascent of the crag. Before I had spent half an hour at my task, however, I found that its difficulties were far greater than I had anticipated. The path was often interrupted by masses of fallen rock, and frequently, from long disuse, difficult to hit upon when once lost. Brambles and prickly pears, too, formed terrible obstacles at some places, while at others the rocks were rendered slippery by dripping water, and the danger of a false step was very great. In no wise discouraged, I struggled on; but to my astonishment I could perceive that it was wearing nigh to noon before I had accomplished more than half the ascent. I had therefore to take counsel with myself whether I should abandon my enterprise at once, or resolve to pass the night on the crag, for I readily saw that before I could reach the level plain again it would be too late to resume my homeward road over the mountain, many parts of which required daylight to traverse. Although I had never passed a night away from home, I had often told my mother that I should probably be led to do so, and that she shoud not feel any alarm at my absence; and she who well knew the honest character of the mountaineers, also knew that I was known to them for miles far around. My resolve was at length taken to pass the night in the shelter of the old castle, and take the following morning for my return.

As the day wore on, the heat grew more and more oppressive; occasional gusts of wind would sweep past, followed by a dead, unbroken stillness, in which not a leaf moved. It seemed as though mysterious spirits of the elemental world were conversing together in this lone region, and the thought impressed me more powerfully as at intervals a low, half-subdued murmuring seemed to rise from the deep glens around me. At first I deemed they were self-delusions, but as I listened I could distinctly trace the sounds as they rose and fell, swelling now to a deep, rolling noise, and then dying away in soft fading cadences.

My mind was stored with stories of supernatural interest, and if I did not implicitly believe the existence of such agencies, yet I cannot affirm that I altogether rejected them. I was in that state in which, while reason is unconvinced, the imagination is still impressed, and fears and terrors hold sway, when the very causes of them were stoutly denied reality. One of the commonest of all the superstitions of mountain regions is the belief in a certain genius, who invariably resists the intrusion of mortals within the precincts of his realm. The terrible tales of his vengeance form the subject of Alpine horrors, and the dreadful miseries of those who have incurred his displeasure point the moral of many a story, and "the Kobold of the Lost Glen" held a proud pre-eminence among such narratives. The heat, as I have said, grew oppressive; it became at last almost stifling, for the clouds descended near the earth, and the atmosphere became dense and suffocating. A few heavy drops of rain then fell, pattering slowly and lazily on the leaves; and then, as if at the word of some dread command, the thunder rolled forth in one

long, loud, continuous peal, that seemed to shake the very mountains. Crash after crash followed, till the very rocks seemed splitting with the loud artillery, while through the darkness of the murky air, great sheets of yellow lightning gleamed, and long chains of the bright element zig-zagged through the sky; the rain, too, began to fall in torrents, and almost at once the montain streams swelled and bounded in foamy cataracts from cliff and precipice. The din was deafening, and the loud crashing thunder, with the hissing rain, the rushing rivers, and the dense shaking forests, made up a grand and awful chorus. For a while I found a shelter beneath the thick foliage of the hollies, but the sweeping wind at last rent this frail sanctuary in twain, and in a moment I was drenched thoroughly.

Although still early in the afternoon, a premature night seemed to have set in, for the air grew darker and darker, till at length the mountains at either side of the glen were lost to sight, and a dense watery vapour surrounded the crag on which I stood. My position was not without peril, since if the waters did not abate at the end of some hours, I should be left to starve on the rock. This danger at once occurred to me, and my mind was already overcome by gloomy forebodings. One thing was, however, certain — I must endeavour to reach the castle before nightfall, for to pass the dark hours where I was would be impossible. The difficulty of the ascent was now increased fourfold; the footing was less secure on the rocks, and dashing torrents tore past with a force that strength like mine could never have combated. It is with pride that I remember to have looked all those perils boldly in the face; it is, I say, a proud thought to me, even

now, that as a mere boy I could meet danger boldly and undauntedly. More than once, indeed, the fatal terrors of my position stood arrayed before me, and I thought that I had seen my dear home and my kind mother for the last time — I could even speculate upon poor Raper's affliction when he came to hear of my calamity. With thoughts like these I wended my way along, ever upwards and ever more steep and difficult. Although the storm had spent much of its fury, the rain continued to fall in torrents, and the roar of the swollen streams almost equalled the deafening clamour of the thunder. The sudden transition from unbroken silence to the crash and tumult of falling waters is one of the most striking features of Alpine scenery, and suggests, even at moments of the greatest calm and quiet, a sense of foreboding peril. The sudden change of temperature, too, from intense heat to an almost biting cold, induces terrific storms of wind, almost tornadoes, by whose violence great trees are torn up by the roots, and vast rocks hurled down from crag and precipice. In turning the angle of a cliff, I came suddenly upon one of these gusts, which carried me completely off my legs, and swept me into a low copse or brushwood, stunned and senseless. I must have remained a considerable time unconscious, for when I came to myself the stars were shining in the dark blue sky of night, and the air calm, serene, and summer-like. It was with difficulty I could remember where I was, and by what chances I had come there; and it was indeed with a sinking heart that I arose, not knowing whither to turn my steps, nor whether my chance of safety lay above or below me.

I was sorely bruised besides, and one of my arms

severely injured by my fall, as I discovered in attempting to use my staff. It was at that moment, thoughts of my home came full and forcibly before me; the little chamber where I used to sit for hours in happy occupation; my seat beside the hearth; my place at my mother's wheel, for she used to spin during the hazy days of winter; and, in my despair, I burst into a flood of tears. The excess of grief passed off, and there now succeeded a dogged resolve to accomplish my first purpose, and I again set out for the summit.

I had not proceeded far, when on looking upward towards the sky, I saw, or thought I saw, a light twinkling through the trees above me. The foliage was dense and thick, and grew around the base of the rock which formed the immediate foundation of the castle, so that it was only at certain spots a light, if such there was, could be visible. Onward I pushed now, with a new impulse given by hope; and, to my inexpressible joy, as I rounded the corner of a crag, I came full in sight of the old tower, and saw, from one of the narrow windows, the sparkle of a bright light, that, streaming forth, formed a long line upon the grass.

The window was fully twenty feet from the ground, nor was the entrance door more than a few feet lower — being one of those fastnesses to which access was had by a ladder, drawn up for safety after entering. Many of these ruined castles in the valley of the Reichenau were, I knew, occupied by the shepherds; some indeed had been converted into refuge-houses for lost travellers, and supplied by the government of the canton with some few appliances of succour. The situation of this one, however, refuted all such possibility,

since its very difficulty of approach would have rendered it unavailable for either purpose. As I stood on the little level table-land in front of the old ruin, and gazed upwards at the narrow window from which gleamed the light, all my former superstitious terrors returned, and I felt that cold shrinking of the heart that comes of a danger undefined and incomprehensible; nor am I certain that I would not rather have looked upon the ruin dark and desolate, than with that yellow streak that told of some inhabitant within.

The northern side of the Alpine ranges have few if any traditions of robbers. The horrors with which they are peopled are all those of an immaterial world, so that my mind ranged over the tales of wood-demons, Kobolds, and mountain imps, without one single thought of the perils of banditti; nor was I altogether without a strong prompting of eager curiosity to know what precise shape and semblance these strange creatures wore. Thus impelled, I set about examining the spot, and seeing in what way I might be able to approach the window. The trees on either side were too low, and the ivy which grew against the ruined wall itself offered the only means of ascent. I was an expert climber, and well knew that, though the ivy will often afford good and safe footing, it will always give way beneath the grasp of the hand, and that the stones of the wall would afford me the only security. In this wise it was, therefore, I began the ascent, and, with slow and careful steps, I arrived at last within a few feet of the window-sill. My impatience at this moment overcame all my prudence, and, with an eager spring, I tried to catch the stone, I missed it, and grasping the ivy in my despair, the branches gave way, and,

after a brief struggle, and with a loud cry of terror, I fell backwards to the ground.

The stars seemed to flit to and fro above me; trees, mountains, and rocks seemed to heave in mad commotion around; my brain was filled with the wildest image of peril and suffering, and then came blank unconsciousness.

. . . . . .

I was sitting rather than lying on a low pallet-bed stretched against the wall; in front of me a window curtained with a much-worn horseman's cloak; and around me in the room, which was lofty and spacious, were a few rudely-fashioned articles of furniture, and two or three utensils for cooking — all of the very meanest kind. My arm was bound with a bandage where I had been bled, and my great debility, and a sense of half-incoherence in all my thoughts, told of severe illness. At a table beneath the window, and bent over it as if writing, sat a tall, very old man, in a coarse woollen blouse of red-brown stuff, with a cap of the same colour and material; sandals, fastened round the ankles with leather thongs, formed the protection of his feet; these, and a belt with a gourd for carrying water attached to it, made up his whole costume.

His face, when he seemed to look towards me, was harshly lined and severe — the lower jaw projected greatly, and the character of the whole expression was cold and stern; but the head was lofty and capacious, and indicated considerable powers of thought and reflection.

There was over me a sense of weakness so oppressive and so overwhelming, that though I saw the ob-

jects I have here mentioned, and gazed on them for hours long, yet I made no effort to speak, nor ask where I was, nor to whom I was indebted for shelter and succour. This apathy — for it was, indeed, such — held me entranced, even when the old man would approach the bed to feel my pulse, to bathe my temples with water, or wet my lips with a drink. After these visits he would take his staff from the corner, and leave the room, to which he frequently did not return for many hours. Thus went day after day; monotony over everything; till my head ached with very weariness, as the lazy hours went by. Where was I? Was this state of suffering malady? Or was it imprisonment? Why was I thus? How long should I still continue so? Such were the puzzling questions which would present themselves before me — never to be solved — never replied to.

In my dreamy debility, when my faculties tottered like wearied limbs, I often wondered if I might not have entered upon some new kind of existence, in which long years of such wakeful sorrow should be gone through; and in a mood like this was it that I lay one day all alone, when from the open window there came the thrilling notes of a blackbird, which sat on a tree close by. Not even the kindest words of a fellow-creature could have filled my heart with more ecstasy than those sounds, reminding me of my once happy life — my home, the little garden of the chateau, and its tangled alleys of fruit-trees and flowering shrubs. I struggled to arise from my bed, and after some efforts I succeeded, and with weak step and trembling limbs, I reached the window and looked out.

Sudden as the change from blackest night to the light of breaking day was the effect that came over me, as I gazed down the valley, and recognised each well-known crag, and cliff, and mountain peak of the Verlohrnes Loch. At once now came back all memory of my adventure and the night of the storm; and at once I saw that I was standing at the window of that old ruin which had been the goal of my wandering.

How I longed to learn what interval of time had gone over! I tried to calculate it by remembering that it was early summer when I came, but still the trees wore no tokens of coming autumn. They were bright in foliage, and leafy, and the streams that traversed the valley were small and tiny rills, that showed no touch of the season of rains. From these observations I now addressed myself to an inspection of the interior. Well used as I had been to habits of poverty, the aspect of this chamber still struck me with astonishment. The only thing like food was some Indian corn meal, carefully covered up in an iron vessel, and a jar of water; of clothing, the cloak which formed the window-curtain, and a sheepskin fashioned into a rude resemblance to a coat, were all that were to be seen. The furniture consisted of a low stool and a single chair, the trunk of an elm tree representing a table. On this, however, an attempt at a desk had been made, and here, to my astonishment, were now masses of papers, covered with figures from top to bottom — algebraic signs and calculations without end! Not one word of writing, not a phrase in any language, was to be met with, but page after page of these mystical sums, which seemed to be carried on from one sheet of paper to the other. How eagerly I

sought out something which might give me a clue to the writer of these figures, but in vain; I pored over them long and carefully — I studied their form and their size. I tried — how hopelessly — to trace out some purpose in the calculations, and to divine their object and end — but to no avail! I had heard tell of persons whose intellects had been deranged by the intense study of a difficult problem — the search after some unattainable object in science. I had read wonderful stories of long years of toilsome labour — whole lives passed in an arduous struggle, till death had at last relieved them from a contest with the "impossible." Could the writer of these be the victim of such a delusion? Might he have sought out this lone spot, to live apart and away from all the distracting influences of life, and to devote himself to some such task? Had his mind given way under this pressure, or had weakened faculties first led to this career? All these doubts presented themselves to me in turns; and again I turned to the complex pages of figures to assist my conjectures.

Alas they could convey nothing to me — they were symbols only of so much toil and labour, but to what end or object I could not guess. As I sat thus, I thought that I detected an error in one of the calculations. It was an algebraic quantity mis-stated; and, on looking down, I remarked that the mistake was repeated over and over, through a long series of figures. Any proficiency I had ever attained at school was in matters of this kind, owing, as I did, everything to Raper's guidance and instruction; so that I found little difficulty in ascertaining that this error had really

occurred, and in all likelihood marred all the deductions to be hoped from the calculation.

To escape from the dreamy vacuity of my late life, by an actual occupation, was an unspeakable relief; and I felt in the pursuit all the interest of an adventurer. There was something positive, tangible, real, as it were, here, instead of that boundless expanse of doubt over which my mind had been wandering, and I addressed myself to the task with eagerness. The error first discovered had led to others, and I diligently traced out all its consequences; and making the fitting corrections, I set forth the results on a slip of paper that I found, happily, clear of figures.

So tired was I with the unaccustomed exertion, that, when I had done, I had barely reached my bed ere I fell off in a deep and heavy sleep. I awoke late in the night, for so I judged it from the starry sky which I could see through the open window. The old man sat at his usual seat beside the desk; and with his head supported by his hands, seemed to study the pages before him. The flickering lamp-light that fell upon his worn features, his snow-white beard, his wrinkled forehead, and thick-veined hands, together with the heavy folds of the cloak which, for warmth, he had thrown over his shoulders, made him resemble one of those alchymists or astrologers we see in Dutch pictures. I had not looked long at him till I saw that he was pondering over the corrections I had made, and trying to remember if they were by his own hand. At last he turned suddenly round, and fixed his eyes on me. Mine met the glance, and thus we remained for some seconds staring steadily at each other. He

then rose slowly like one fatigued from exertion, and, with the paper in his hand, approached the bed. How my heart beat as he drew nigh! how I wondered what words he would utter — what accents he would speak in, and in what mood of mind.

He came slowly forward, and seating himself beside my bed on the low stool, he pointed to the figures on the paper, and said, in the Romaic dialect of the mountaineers, the one word, "Yours?" Though the word was uttered in the peasant dialect, the tone of the voice was not that of a "Bauer;" and, re-assured by thinking that he might be of superior condition, I answered him at once in French.

"Is that your native tongue?" said he, replying to me in the same language.

I shook my head in negative.

"You are a German boy, then?" said he.

"Nor that, either," replied I. "I am English."

"English! you English, and in this place!" cried he, in astonishment. "From what part of England do you come?" said he, in English, which he spoke as a native.

"I came from Ireland. My father was of that country. My mother, I have heard, was French."

"You have heard! So that you do not know it of yourself?"

"I never remember to have seen either of them."

"Your name?"

"Carew — Jasper Carew."

"I recollect one of that name," said he, pondering for some time. "But he could not have been your father. And how came you here?"

In a few words I told him of my adventure, and

in doing so revealed such habits as appeared to interest him, for he questioned me closely about my wanderings, and the causes which at first suggested them. In turn I asked and learned from him, that several weeks had elapsed since my accident; that numerous scouts had traversed the glen, evidently sent in search of me, but that for reasons which regarded himself, he had not spoken with, nor, indeed, been seen by any of them, but still had written a few lines to the Curé of Reichenau to say that I was in safety, and should soon be restored to my friends. This he had conveyed to the post by night, but without suffering any clue to escape from whence it came.

"And these figures are yours?" said he, referring to the paper.

I nodded, and he went on: —

"What toilsome nights, boy, had I been spared, if I had but detected this error. These mistakes have marred whole weeks of labour. I must have been ill. My head must have been suffering, to have fallen into error like this; for see, here are far deeper and more abstruse calculations — all correct, all accurate. But who can answer for moments of weakness!"

He sighed heavily, and the stern expression of his features assumed a look of softened, but suffering meaning.

"I have often thought," said he, hastily, "that if another were joined with me in this task, its completeness would be more certain; while to trust myself alone with this secret is both unwise and unjust. Human life is the least certain of all things. To-morrow I may be no more. I have already passed through enough to have brought many to the grave.

You, however, are young. You have yet, in all likelihood, long years of life before you. What if you were to become my associate?"

I gave no reply for some seconds. When he repeated his words still more forcibly, —

"I should first learn what it is I should be engaged in," said I. "I should be satisfied that the object was just, reasonable, and, above all, practicable."

"You speak like a sage, boy," cried he. "Whence came such wisdom as this?"

"All my teachings of this kind," said I, "have come from her who now calls herself my mother, and whom I love with a son's affection."

"And how is she called?"

I could not tell him. I only knew her as one who was as a mother to me, and yet said she had no title to that name. Once or twice I had heard her addressed as the Countess. There ended my knowledge of her condition.

"She is rich, then?" asked he.

"Far from it," said I, sorrowfully.

"Then can I make her so," exclaimed he. "Joined with me in this mighty enterprise, you can be the richest and the greatest man of the age. Nay, child, this is not matter to smile at. I am no dreamer — no moon-struck student of the impossible. I do not ponder over those subtle combinations of metals that are to issue forth in yellow gold, nor do I labour to distil the essences which are to crystallise into rubies. What I strive at has been reached already — the goal won, the prize enjoyed! Ay, by my own father. By him was

this brilliant discovery proclaimed triumphantly before the face of Europe."

The exultation with which he uttered these words seemed to carry him away in thought from the scene wherein he stood, and his eyes gleamed with a strange fire, and his lips continued to mutter rapidly. Then ceasing of a sudden, he said, —

"I must seek her — she will recognise me, for she will have heard our history. She will give her permission, too, to you to join me in my great design. The fate that sent you hither was no accident. Boy, there are none such in life. Our passions in their wilfulness colour destiny with fitful changes, and these we call chance; but in nature all is predetermined, and by plan."

Now, rambling on this wise — now, stopping to question me as to who we were, whence we came, and with what objects, he continued to talk till, fairly overcome by weariness, I dropt off to sleep, his loud tones still ringing in my ears through my dreams.

The following day he never left me; he seemed insatiable in his desire to learn what progress I had made in knowledge, and how far my acquirements extended. For classical learning and literature he evinced no respect. These, and modern languages, he said, were mere accomplishments that might adorn a life of ease and luxury; but that to a man who would be truly great there was but one subject of inquiry — the source of wealth, and the causes which make states affluent. These, he said, were the legitimate subjects for high intelligence to engage upon. "Master these," said he, "and monarchs are your vassals." I was amazed to discover that amid the mass of prejudices

which encumbered his mind, it was stored with information the most various and remarkable. It was evident, too, that he had lived much in the great world, and was familiar with all its habits and opinions. As time wore on, I learned from him that his present life, with all its privations, was purely voluntary — that he possessed sufficient means to support an existence of comfort and ease; "but," added he, "if you would give the intelligence a supremacy, it must be done at the cost of animal enjoyment. If the body is to be pampered, the brain will take its ease. To this end came I here; to this end have I lived fourteen years of toil and isolation. I have estranged myself from all that could distract me — friendships, pleasures, the great events of the age — I know none of them! I am satisfied to toil and think now, that, in after-ages, men should hold my name in reverence, and regard my memory with affection."

Although he constantly made allusions of this kind, he never proceeded to give me any closer insight into his designs; and if at moments the reasonableness of his manner and the strong force of his remarks impressed me favourably with regard to his powers of mind, at others I was induced to think that nothing short of erring faculties could have condemned a man to a voluntary life of such abject want and of such cruel privation as he endured.

It was still some weeks before I had strength to return home, but he permitted me to write every second day to my mother and Raper, from whom I heard in return. If, at first, my ardent longing to be once more at home — to be with those who made up the whole world of my existence, surpassed all other

thoughts, I grew day by day to feel the strange fascination of an unknown interest in the subject of his talk, and to experience an intense anxiety to know his secret.

It was evident that he felt the influence he had obtained over me, and was bent on extending and enlarging it, for constantly would he dwell upon the themes which attracted me and fascinated my attention. Shall I confess what these were? The brilliant pictures of courtly life, the splendour and fascination of a palace, where all that could charm and captivate abounded, and all were at the feet of one who, not a king, was yet greater than a king, and who in the mighty power of his intellect held kings and kaisers as his bond slaves.

That these were not mere fancies he assured me by saying, —

"This has been witnessed by all Europe; it is not more than fifty years ago that the world has seen all that I tell you. When I can convince you of this, will you pledge yourself to be my follower?"

I at once gave my promise, and ratified it by a solemn vow.

The next day we started on our return to Reichenau.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"The Herr Robert."

I WILL not attempt to describe the welcome that met me on my return, nor the gratitude with which my mother overwhelmed my kind protector. The whole school, and no inconsiderable part of the village itself,

had gone forth to meet us, and we were conducted back in a sort of triumph. Over and over again was I obliged to recount my story, of which the mystery still remained unexplained. Who and what was the strange recluse who so long had inhabited the castle of the Forlorn Glen, and who now stood before them, old and simply clad, but still bearing unmistakable marks of having been a person of some condition?

As Mr. Robert he desired to be known by me, and as such was he received by my mother. He declined the offer she freely made him of a room in her own small house, and hired a little lodging in the toll-house on the bridge, and which he said was convenient to the garden of the chateau, where he obtained the liberty of walking. If the interest which he manifested in me was at first a cause of anxiety to my mother, not knowing what it portended, nor how far it might contribute to withdraw my affection from herself, it was clear that she soon became satisfied with whatever explanation he afforded, and that those long conversations, frequently prolonged to a late hour of the night, which they held together, had the effect of reconciling her to his views and intentions.

Thus was a new individual introduced into the little circle of our family party, and each Sunday saw him seated at our dinner-table, of which his conversation formed the great charm. It was not alone that his mind was stored with varied information, the most rare and curious, but his knowledge of the world itself and of mankind seemed more remarkable still; and frequently, after he had left us of an evening, have I overheard my mother express her wonder to Raper who and what he had been, and by what strange

events he was reduced to his present condition. These remarks of hers at first showed me that whatever revelations he might have made in his long interviews with her, he had told little or nothing of his own story. Such was indeed the case, and I can remember well a little scene, in itself unimportant and of no consequence, which can both portray my mother's intense curiosity on this theme, and display some traits of him for whom it was excited.

It happened that at the period when her little quarterly pittance came due, my mother was confined to home by a slight feverish cold, and Herr Klann, the banker and money-changer of the village, was condescending enough to come in person and hand her the amount. In spite of her narrow fortune, my mother had always been treated with a marked deference by the village, and Herr Klann demeaned himself on the occasion with every show of courtesy and politeness. He, indeed, did not scruple to display that he was the great depositary of riches for miles and miles around; — that all the relations of trade and commerce — all the circumstances of family fortune — the dowries of brides, the portions of younger sons, were in his charge and keeping. He talked much of the responsibility of his station and its requirements, and, like many others, while encomiumising his secrecy he exhibited the very opposite quality. There was not a house in the village or its neighbourhood of which he did not incidentally relate some story or incident. He became, in fact, candour itself in his confessions. It is but fair to own that my mother looked most becomingly in her half invalid costume, and that the little straw-wrapped flask of "Siebenberger" with which she regaled him was

excellent. Herr Klann was a man to acknowledge both such influences. He possessed the Hebrew weaknesses, both as regards gold and beauty. He therefore became largely confidential — taking a survey of the whole neighbourhood, and revealing their circumstances with the minute anatomy that a surgeon might have employed in displaying their structure. My mother heard him with no peculiar interest, till by accident he alluded to the "Herr Robert;" it was a mere reference to the toll-house, where he lived, but the name at once awakened her attention.

"With him, I conclude," said she, "your monied dealings are few. He does not appear to be wealthy."

"He is a mystery in every way, madam," replied Klann, "his very cash does not come through a banker or an agent; he has no credit, no bills — nothing. He comes down to me at times, say once a-month or so, to change a few gold pieces — they are always 'Louis' I remark, and sometimes of the time of the late reign. They are good money, and full weight invariably, that I must say."

"And what may be your own opinion of all this?"

"I can form none — positively none, madam. Of course, I need not say that I regret the vulgar notion in the village, that he is in communication with supernatural agencies; neither you nor I, madam, are likely to fall into this absurd mistake."

"And so you rather incline to suppose —" She drew out the words tardily, and fixed on Herr Klann a look of ineffable softness and intelligence together.

"I do, madam — that is my private opinion," said he, sententiously.

"Would that account for the life he has been

leading for some years back — should we have found him passing such a long term in isolation from all the world?" asked she.

"I think so, madam, and I will tell you why. The agents employed by the regency, and in the beginning of the present reign in France, were all men of certain condition — many of them belonged to high families, and, having ruined their fortunes by extravagance, were fain to take any occupation for mere subsistence. Some of them resided as nobles in Vienna, and were received at the court of the Empress. Others gained admittance to St. James's. They were supplied with money, both for purposes of play and bribery; and that they used such means to good account is now matter of history. When the game was played out, and they were no longer needed by the government, such men were obliged to retire from the stage whereon they had only played a part. The Duc De Senneterre went into a monastery; Count Leon De Rhode set off for the New World; and there was one taken ill in this very village, whose name I now forget, who had gone into the priesthood, and was head of a seminary in Flanders. What more likely, then, than that our friend at the bridge yonder was some great celebrity of those times, of which I hear he loves to talk and declaim?"

The hint thus thrown out made a deep impression on my mother. It served to explain not only many circumstances of Herr Robert's position, but also to account for the strange glimpses of a great and glorious future in which, at moments of excitement, he would indulge. A life of intrigue and plot would naturally enough suggest ambitious hopes, and conduce to the

very frame of mind which he appeared to reach. That I should become the follower of such a man, and the disciple of such a school, revolted against all her feelings. The spy, no matter how highly accredited and how richly rewarded, was, in her eyes, the most ignoble of all careers; and she would rather have seen me clad in the sheepskin of an Alpine shepherd, than wearing, in this capacity, the decorations of every order of Europe.

From the moment, therefore, the suspicion crossed her mind that Herr Robert had been such, she firmly determined to withdraw me altogether from his intimacy. Nor was the step an easy one. He had become a recognised member of our little household; each evening saw him seated at our hearth or board; on every Sunday he dined with us. His little presents of wine and fruit, and occasionally of books, showed that he intended reciprocity to be a basis of our intercourse, of which, indeed, the balance lay in our favour. How, therefore, was such a state of things to be suddenly arrested? How bring to an abrupt conclusion an intimacy of which nothing had hitherto interrupted the peaceful course? This was a matter of no common difficulty, and for several days did she ponder over it to herself.

It chanced that, for the first time since her arrival at Reichenau, Herr Robert had been slightly indisposed, and being unable to come and see us, had sent for me to come each evening and read to him. At any other moment my mother would have thought no more of this, but coming now, at the very time when her feelings of doubt and suspicion were torturing her, she regarded the circumstance with actual apprehension.

At first, she thought of sending Raper along with me, in the guise of protector, but as Herr Robert had not requested his company, there seemed an awkwardness in this; then she half resolved to refuse me permission, on pretence of requiring my presence at home — this, too, would look ungracious; and when at last she did accord her leave, it was for a very limited time, and with strict injunctions to be back by an early hour.

It chanced that Herr Robert felt on this evening a more than ordinary desire to be frank and confidential. He related to me various anecdotes of his early days, the scenes he had mixed in, and the high associates with whom he was intimate; and when he had excited my curiosity and wonderment to a high degree, by gorgeous narratives of the great world, he stopped short and said — "I would not have you think, Jasper, that these dukes and princes were more gifted or more endowed than other men; the only real difference between them is, that they employ their faculties on great events, not little ones; and all their pleasures, their amusements, their very vices, react upon the condition of mankind in general, and consequently whatever goes forward in their society has a certain amount of importance, not for itself, but for what may follow it."

These words made a profound impression upon me, leading to the conviction, that out of this charmed circle life had no ambition worth striving for, no successes that deserved a struggle. From my mother I had no concealment, and before I went to my bed I told her all that the Herr Robert had said to me, and showed how deeply this sentiment had sunk into my mind.

I conclude that it must have been from some rela-

tion to her former fears she took immediate alarm at the possible bent my mind was receiving. Assuredly she deemed that his influence over me was not without peril, and resolved the following morning to send for the Herr Robert, and in all frankness avow her fears, and appeal to his friendship to allay them.

I was about to set off for school when the old man was ascending the stairs, and taking me by the hand, he led me back again into the little chamber, where my mother awaited him.

"Let Jasper remain with us, madam," said he; "the few words of your note have shown me what is passing in your mind, and it will save you and me a world of explanation if he be suffered to be present."

My mother assented, not over willingly, perhaps, and the old man taking a seat, at once begun, —

"If I had ever suspected, madam, that my history could have possibly possessed any interest for you, you should certainly have heard it ere now. My opinion was, however, different; and I thought, moreover, that as I had strictly abstained from encroaching upon your confidence, an equal reserve might have protected mine. Forgive me, if by any accident the slightest word should escape me to cause you pain or displeasure. Nothing can be further from my thoughts than this intention, and I beg of you so to receive whatever I say.

"Some years ago, a physician, in whom I had and have the fullest confidence, forewarned me that if certain symptoms which I then laboured under should ever recur, my case would be beyond remedy, and my life could not be prolonged many days. Two days since, the first signs of these became evident; yesterday

the appearance became more palpable; to-day I recognise them in full force. When a man of my age talks of his approaching death, he only speaks of what has been before his thoughts every day and every night for years back. Whatever benefit I was ever capable of rendering my fellow men in my younger days, I have been latterly a useless and profitless member of the guild, and for this reason, that though time had not effaced my powers of intellect, the energy and the force that should develop them was gone. Without youth there is no vitality; without vitality, no action; without action, no success. I often fancied that results might arise, if to the mature thoughts and experience of age were to be added the fire, the energy, and the passion of youth. If caution and rashness, reserve and intrepidity — the distrust that comes of knowing men, with that credulous hope that stirs the young heart, were all to centre in one nature, what might we not effect? The fate that brought Jasper and myself together whispered to me that he might become such! I pictured to my mind the training he should go through, the hard discipline of work and labour, and yet without impairing in the slightest that mainspring of all power, the daring courage and energy of a young and brave spirit. To this end, he should incur no failures in early life, never know a reverse till it could become to him the starting point for higher success. And thus launched upon life with every favouring breeze of Fortune, what might not be predicted of his course?

"He who would stand high among his fellow men, and be regarded as their benefactor and superior during his lifetime, must essentially be a man of action!

The great geniuses of authorship, the illustrious in art, have received their best rewards from posterity; contemporaries have attacked them, depreciated and reviled them; the very accidents of their lives have served to injure the excellence of their compositions. But the man of action stands forth to his own age great and distinguished; the world on which his services have bestowed benefits is proud to reward him; and either as a legislator, a conqueror, or a discoverer, his claims meet full acknowledgment.

"Who would not be one of these, then? — who would not aspire to win the enthusiasm that tracks such a career, and makes a mere mortal godlike?

"To be such I possessed the secret! Nay, madam, this is not the weakness of faltering intellect, nor the outpouring of a silly vanity. Hear me out with patience but a very little longer. It is not of some wonder of science or of mystery, of occult art, that I speak, and yet the power to which I allude is infinitely greater than any of these were ever fancied to bestow. Imagine an engine, by which the failing energies of a whole nation can be rallied, its wasting vigour repaired, its resources invigorated. Fancy a nation — millions — brought out of poverty, debt, and distress, into wealth, affluence, and abundance; the springs of their industry reinforced, the sources of their traffic refreshed. Picture to your mind the change from an embarrassed government, a ruined aristocracy, an indebted, poverty-stricken people, to a full treasury, a splendid nobility, and a prosperous and powerful nation. Imagine all this, and then if you can ascribe the transformation to the working of one man's intelligence, what will you say of him?

"I am not conjuring up a mere visionary or impossible triumph; what I describe has been actually done, and he who accomplished it was my own father!

"Yes, madam, the mightiest financial scheme the world has ever witnessed, the grandest exemplification of the principle of credit that has ever been promulgated by man, was his invention. He farmed the whole revenues of France, and at one stroke annihilated the peculation of receivers-general, and secured the revenue of the nation. He fructified the property of the state by employing its vast resources in commercial speculations; from the east to the west, from the fertile valley of the Mississippi to the golden plains of Asia, he opened every land to the enterprise of Frenchmen. Paris itself he made the capital city of the world. Who has not heard of the splendour of the regency; of Chantilly, the gorgeous palace of the Duc D'Orleans, the very stables more magnificent than the residences of many princes? The wealth and the rank of Europe flocked thither; and in the pleasures of that paradise of capitals lies the history of an age! He who did all this was my own father, and his name was John Law, of Lauriston! Ay, madam, you see before you, poor, humbly clad, and grey-haired, going down to the grave in actual want, the son of a man who once counted his revenue by millions, whose offerings to the Church of St. Roch would have made a meet dowry for a princess, and whose very menials acquired fortunes such as modern nobility cannot equal."

As he spoke, he drew forth a large silver-clasped pocket-book, and opening it, took out a mass of papers.

"I do not ask you to take any part of this on trust," continued he. "There, with the seal of the chancellor, and the date, January the 5th, 1720, is his patent as comptroller-general of France. Here are letters from the Regent, the Prince of Deux Ponts, the Duke of Rohan; I leave them in your hands, and will send you others that authenticate all I have stated. Of my own life, humble and uneventful, I have no wish to speak; more than this I know, for I have long studied the great principles of my father's secret. The causes of his reverses I have thoroughly investigated; they are not inherent in the system, nor are they reasonably attributable to it in any way. His discovery must not be disparaged by the vices of a profligate prince, a venal administration, and an ignorant cabinet; nor must the grandeur of his conception be charged with the rash infatuation of a nation of gamblers. Law's system stands free from every taint of dishonesty, when disassociated with the names of those who prostituted it. For years long have I studied the theory, and tested it by every proof within my power. To make the fact known to the world; to publish abroad the great truth, that credit well based and fortified is national wealth, and that national wealth, so based, is almost boundless — this became the object of my whole life. I knew that a certain time must elapse, ere the disasters that followed my father's downfall were forgotten; and that I should, in all likelihood, never live to see the day when his glorious system would be revived, and his memory vindicated; but I hoped to have found one worthy to inherit this secret, and in whose keeping it might be transmitted to after-ages. I will not weary you with the story of all

my disappointments, the betrayals, and the treachery, and the falsehoods I have endured. Enough! I became a recluse from mankind. I gave myself up to my old pursuits of calculation and combination, undisturbed; and I have lived on, to this hour, with one thought ever before me, and one fear — is this great secret to die out with me? and are countless millions of men destined to toil and slavery, while this vast source of affluence and power shall lie rusting and unused?"

The intense fervour of his voice, and his tone of self-conviction as he spoke, had evidently impressed my mother strongly in his favour; and when she turned over, one by one, the letters before her, and read passages penned by the hand of Du Pin, the chief secretary of the Regent, D'Argenson, Alberoni the Cardinal, and others of like station, and then turned to look on the feeble and wasted figure of the old man, her eyes filled with tears of pity and compassion.

"My heart is now relieved of a weary load," said he, sighing. "Now, I shall go back to my home, and to-morrow, if I be not able to come here, you and Jasper will visit me, for I have still much to tell you."

My mother did her utmost to detain him where he was. She saw that the excitement of his narrative had greatly increased the symptoms of fever upon him, and she wished to tend and watch over him; but he was resolute in his determination, and left us, almost abruptly.

Raper and myself went several times that evening to see him, but he would not receive us. The reply to our inquiries was, that he was deeply engaged, and

could not be disturbed. I remember well how often during the night I arose from my bed to look out at the little window of the toll-house, which was that of Herr Robert's room. A light burned there the whole night through, and more than once I could see his figure pass between it and the window. Poor old man! — was it that he was devoting the last few hours of his life to the weary task that had worn him to a very shadow? Towards daybreak I sank into a heavy sleep, from which I was suddenly awakened by Raper calling on me to get up and dress at once.

"Herr Robert is dying!" said he, "and wishes to see you and speak with you. Be quick, for there is not a moment to lose."

I dressed myself as speedily as my trembling limbs would permit, and followed Raper down the stairs, and into the street. My mother was already there, waiting for us, and we hurried along towards the toll-house without a word.

The toll-keeper's wife beckoned to us impatiently as we came in sight, and we pressed eagerly on, and entered the little chamber where Herr Robert lay, half-dressed, upon his bed. He knew us, and took each of us by the hand as we came forward. His face was greatly flushed, and his eyes stared wildly, and his dry, cracked lips muttered frequently and fast. Several large packages of papers lay beside him sealed and addressed, and to these he made a motion with his hand, as if he would speak of them.

"Tell us of yourself, Herr Robert," said my mother, in a kind voice, as she sat down beside him. "Do you feel any pain?"

He seemed not to hear her, but muttered indis-

tinctly to himself. Then, turning short round to me, he said —

"I have forgotten the number of the house, but you can't mistake it. It is the only one with a stone balcony over the entrance-gate. It was well enough known once. John Law's house — the 'Rue Quincampoix.' The room looks to the back — and the safe. Who is listening to us?"

I re-assured him, and he went on —

"The ingots were forged as if coming from the gold mines of Louisiana. D'Argenson knew the trick, and the Regent too. They it was who wrecked him. They and Tencivi."

His eyes grew heavy, and his voice subsided to a mere murmur after this, and he seemed to fall off in a drowsy stupor. The whole of that day and the next he lingered on thus, breathing heavily, and at intervals seeming to endeavour to rally himself from the oppression of sleep, but in vain! Exhaustion was complete, and he passed away calmly, and so quietly, that we did not mark the moment when he ceased to breathe.

My mother led me away weeping from the room; and Raper remained to look after his papers, and make the few arrangements for his humble burial.

The same day that we laid him in the earth, came a letter from the Count de Gabriac, to say that he would be with us on the morrow. It was the only letter he had written for several months past, and my mother's joy was boundless at the prospect of seeing him. Thus did sunshine mingle with shadow in our life, and tears of happiness mingle with those of sorrow!

CHAPTER XXV.

The Count de Gabriac.

I HAD often heard that the day which should see the Count restored to us would be one of festivity and enjoyment. Again and again had we talked over all our plans of pleasure for that occasion; but the reality was destined to bring black disappointment! We were returning in sadness from the toll-house, when a messenger came running to tell of the Count's arrival; and my mother, leaving me with Raper, to whom she whispered a few hurried words, hastened homewards.

I thought it strange that she had not taken me along with her, but I walked along silently at Raper's side, lost in my own thoughts, and not sorry to have for my companion one little likely to disturb them. We sauntered onward through some meadows that skirted the river; and at last, coming down to the stream, seated ourselves by the brink, each still sunk in his own reflections.

It was a bright day of midsummer: the air had all that exhilaration peculiar to the season in these Alpine districts. The stream ran clear as crystal at our feet; and the verdure of grass and foliage was in its full perfection. But one single object recalled a thought of sorrow, and that was the curtained window of the little chamber wherein Herr Robert lay dead.

To this spot my eyes would return, do what I could; and thither, too, sped all my thoughts, in spite of me. The influence which for some time back he had possessed over me was perfectly distinct from that which originates in affectionate attachment. Indeed

all his appeals to me were the very reverse of such. His constant argument was, that a man fettered by affection, and restricted by ties of family, was worthless for all purposes of high ambition; and that for the real successes of life, one must sacrifice everything like individual enjoyment. So far had he impressed me with these notions, that I already felt a kind of pleasure in little acts of self-denial, and rose in my own esteem by slight traits of self-restraint. The comparative isolation in which I lived, and my estrangement from those of my own age, favoured this impression, and I grew by degrees to look upon the sports and pleasures of boyhood with all the disdainful compassion of an old ascetic.

I remember well how, as I lay in the deep grass and watched the rippling circles of the fast-flowing river, that a sudden thought shot through me. What if all this theory should prove but a well-disguised avarice — that this passion for distinction be only the thirst for wealth — these high purposes of philanthropy but another scheme for self-advancement! Is it possible that for such a price as this I would surrender all the enjoyments of youth, and all the budding affections of coming manhood?

"Mr. Joseph," said I, suddenly, "what is the best life?"

"How do you mean, Jasper? Is it, how shall a man do most good to others?" said he.

"Not alone that; but how shall he best employ his faculties for his own sake?"

"That may mean for his personal advancement, Jasper, for objects purely selfish, and be the reverse of what your first question implied."

"When I said the best, I meant the wisest," replied I.

"The wisest choice is that of a career every duty of which can be fulfilled without the sacrifice of kindly affections, or the relinquishment of family ties. He who can adopt such is both wise and happy."

"Are you happy, Mr. Joseph?" asked I, "for I know you are wise."

"Far more happy than wise, Jasper," said he, smiling. "For one like me, life has borne many blessings."

"Like you!" exclaimed I, in surprise, for to my thinking he was a most enviable mortal; I knew of no one so learned, nor of such varied acquirements. "Like you, Mr. Joseph!"

"Just so, Jasper; I, who have had neither home nor family, have yet found both; I, whom no ties of affection encircled, have lived to feel what it is to be cared for; and I, that almost despaired of being aught to any one, have found that I can be of use to those whom it is my chief happiness to love."

"Tell me your history, Mr. Joseph, or, at least, tell me something about yourself."

"My story, my dear Jasper, is but the history of my own day. The least eventful of lives would be adventurous if placed alongside of mine. I began the world such as you see me, poor, humble-minded, and lowly. I continue my journey in the same spirit that I set out. The tastes and pursuits that then gave me pleasure are still the same real sources of enjoyment to me. What were duties are now delights. Your dear mother was once my pupil as you are now; and it is my pride to see that she has neither forgotten our

old lessons, nor lived to think them valueless. Even here have I seen her fall back upon the pursuits which occupied her childhood; ay, and they have served to lighten some gloomy hours too."

Raper quickly perceived, from the anxiety with which I had listened, that he had already spoken too much; and he abruptly changed the topic by saying, —

"How we shall miss the poor Herr Robert! He had grown to seem one of ourselves!"

"And is my mother unhappy, Mr. Joseph?" said I, recurring to the former remarks.

"Which of us can claim an exemption from sorrow, Jasper? Do you not think that the little village yonder, in that cleft of the mountain — secluded as it looks — has not its share of this world's griefs? Are there not the jealousies, and the rivalries, and the heart-burnings of large communities within that narrow spot?"

While he was yet speaking, a messenger came to summon me home. The Countess, he said, was waiting dinner for me, and yet no invitation came for Raper. He seemed, however, not to notice the omission, but taking my hand, led me along homeward. I saw that some strong feeling was working within, for twice or thrice he pressed my hand fervently, and seemed as if about to say something, and then, subduing the impulse, he walked on in silence.

"Make my respectful compliments to the Count, Jasper," said he, as we came to the door, "and say that I will wait upon him when it is his pleasure to see me."

"That would be now, I'm sure," said I, eagerly.

"Perhaps not so soon; he will have so much to say

to your mother. Another time;" and, hurriedly shaking my hand, he retired.

As I slowly, step by step, mounted the stair, I could not help asking myself, was this the festive occasion I had so often pictured to myself? — was this the happy meeting I had looked forward to so longingly? As I drew near the door I thought I heard a sound like a heavy sob; my hand trembled when I turned the handle of the lock and entered the room.

"This is Jasper," said my mother, coming towards me, and trying to smile through what I could see were recent tears.

The Count was seated on an easy chair, still dressed in the pelisse he had worn on the journey, and with his travelling-cap in his hand. He struck me as a handsome and distinguished-looking man, but with a countenance that alike betrayed passion and intemperance. The look he turned on me as I came forward was assuredly not one of kindness or affection, nor did he extend his hand to me in sign of salutation.

"And this is Jasper!" repeated he slowly after my mother. "He isn't tall of his age, I think."

"We have always thought him so," said my mother gently, "and assuredly he is strong and well grown."

"The better able will he be to brave fatigue and hardship," said he, sternly. "Come forward, sir, and tell me something about yourself. What have they taught you at school? — has Raper made you a bookworm, dreamy and good-for-nothing as himself?"

"Would that he had made me resemble him in anything!" cried I, passionately.

"It were a pity such a moderate ambition should

go unrewarded," replied he, with a sneer. "But to the purpose. What do you know?"

"Little, sir; very little."

"And what can you do?"

"Even less."

"Hopeful, at all events," rejoined he, with a shrug of the shoulders. "They haven't made you a scholar. They surely might have trained you to something."

My mother, who seemed to suffer most acutely during this short dialogue, here whispered something in his ear, to which he as hastily replied, —

"Not a bit of it. I know him better than that; better than you do. Come, sir," added he, turning to me, "the Countess tells me that you are naturally sensitive, quick to feel censure, and prone to brood over it. Is this the case?"

"I scarcely know if it be," said I. "I have but a slight experience of it."

"Ay, that's more like the truth," said he, gaily. "The language of blame is not familiar to him. So then, from Raper you have learned little. Now, what has the great financier and arch-swindler Law taught you?"

"Emile, Emile," broke in my mother, "this is not a way to speak to the boy, nor is it by such lessons he will be trained to gratitude and affection."

"Even there, then, will my teaching serve him," said he, laughingly. "From all that I have seen of life, these are but unprofitable emotions."

I did not venture to look at my mother; but I could hear how her breathing came fast and thick, and could mark the agitation she was under.

"Now, Jasper," said he, "sit down here beside me, and let us talk to each other in all confidence and sincerity. You know enough of your history to be aware that you are an orphan; that both your parents died leaving you penniless, and that to this lady, whom till now you have called your mother, you owe your home."

My heart was full to bursting, and I could only clasp my mother's hand, and kiss it passionately, without being able to utter a word.

"I neither wish to excite your feelings, nor to weary you," said he, calmly, "but it is necessary that I should tell you we are not rich. The fact, indeed, may have occurred to you already," said he, with a disdainful gesture of his hand, while his eye ranged over the poverty-stricken chamber where we sat. "Well," resumed he, "not being rich, but poor; so poor that I have known what it is to feel hunger, and thirst, and cold, for actual want. Worse again," cried he, with a wild and savage energy, "have felt the indignity of being scoffed at for my poverty, and seen the liveried scullions of a great house make jests upon my thread-bare coat and worn hat. It has been my own choosing, however, all of it!" and as he spoke, he arose and paced the room, with strides that made the frail chamber tremble beneath the tread.

"Dearest Emile," cried my mother, "let us have no more of this. Remember that it is so long since we met. Pray keep these sad reflections for another time, and let us enjoy the happiness of being once more together."

"I have no time for fooling, madame," said he, sternly; "I have come a long and weary journey about

this boy. It is unlikely that I can afford to occupy myself with his affairs again. Let him have the benefit — if benefit there be — of my coming. I would relieve you of the burden of his support, and himself of the misery of dependence."

I started with surprise. It was the first time I had ever heard the word with reference to myself, and a sense of shame, almost to sickness, came over me as I stood there.

"Jasper is my child; he is all that a son could be to his mother," cried Polly, clasping me in her arms, and kissing my forehead, and I felt as if my very heart was bursting. "Between us there is no question of burden or independence."

"We live in an age of fine sentiments and harsh actions," said the Count. "I have seen M. de Robespierre shed tears over a dead canary, and I believe that he could control his feelings admirably on the Place de Grève. Jasper, I see that we must finish this conversation when we are alone together. And now to dinner."

He assumed a half air of gaiety as he said this; but it was unavailing as a means of rallying my poor mother, whose tearful eyes and trembling lips told how sadly dispirited she felt at heart.

I had heard much from my mother about the charms of the Count's conversation, his brilliant tone, and his powers of fascination. It had been a favourite theme with her to dilate upon his wondrous agreeability, and the vast range of his acquaintance with popular events and topics. She had always spoken of him, too, as one of buoyant spirits, and even boyish lightheartedness. She had even told me that he would

be my companion, like one of my own age. With what disappointment, then, did I find him the very reverse of all this! All his views of life savoured of bitterness and scorn — all his opinions were tinged with scepticism and distrust; he sneered at the great world and its vanities; but even these he seemed to hold in greater estimation than the humble tranquillity of our remote village. I have him before me this instant, as he leaned out of the window, and looked down the valley towards the Splugen Alps. The sun was setting, and only the tops of the very highest glaciers were now touched with its glory; their peaks shone like burnished gold in the sea of sky, azure and cloudless. The rest of the landscape was softened down into various degrees of shade, but all sufficiently distinct to display the wild and fanciful outlines of cliff and crag, and the zig-zag course by which the young Rhine forced its passage through the rocky gorge. Never had the scene looked in greater beauty — never had every effect of light and shadow been more happily distributed; and I watched him with eagerness, as he gazed out upon a picture which nothing in all Europe can surpass. His countenance for a while remained calm, cold, and unmoved; but at last he broke silence and said, —

"This it was, then, that gave that dark colouring to all your letters to me, Polly; and I half forgive you as I look at it. Gloom and barbarism were never more closely united."

"Oh, Emile, you surely see something else in this grand picture?" cried she, in a deprecating voice.

"Yes," said he, slowly — "I see poverty and misery — half-fed and half-clad shepherds — figures

of bandit ruggedness and savagery. I see these, and I feel that to live amongst them, even for a brief space, would be to endure a horrid nightmare."

He moved away as he spoke, and sauntered slowly out of the room, down the stairs, and into the street.

"Follow him, Jasper," cried Polly, eagerly; "he is dispirited and depressed — the journey has fatigued him, and he looks unwell. Go with him; but do not speak till he addresses you."

I did not much fancy the duty; but I obeyed without a word. He seemed to have quickened his pace as he descended; for when I reached the street, I could detect his figure at some distance off in the twilight. He walked rapidly on, and when he arrived at the bridge, he stopped, and leaning against the balustrade, looked up the valley.

"Are you weary of this, boy?" asked he, while he pointed up the glen.

I shook my head in dissent.

"Not tired of it!" he exclaimed — "not heart-sick of a life of dreary monotony, without ambition, without an object? When I was scarcely older than you I was a garde-du-corps; at eighteen I was in the household, and mixing in all the splendour and gaiety of Paris; before I was twenty I fought the Duc de Valmy and wounded him. At the Longchamps of that same year I drove in the carriage with La Marquese de Rochvilliers, and all the world knows what success that was! Well, all these things have passed away, and now we have a republic, and the coarse pleasures and coarser tastes of the 'canaille.' Men like me are not the 'mode,' and I am too old to conform to the new school. But you are not so; you must leave this, boy — you

must enter the world, and at once, too. You shall come back with me to Paris."

"And leave my mother?"

"She is not your mother; you have no claim on her as such; I am more your relative than she is, for your mother was my cousin. But we live in times when these ties are not binding. The guillotine loosens stronger bonds, and the whisper of the spy is more efficacious than the law of divorce. You must see the capital, and know what life really is. Here you will learn nothing but the antiquated prejudices of Raper, or the weak follies of — others."

He only spoke the last word after a pause of some seconds, and then moodily sank into silence.

I did not venture to utter a word, and waited patiently till he resumed, which he did by saying, —

"The Countess has told you nothing of your history — nothing of your circumstances? Well, you shall hear all from me. Indeed there are facts known to me with which she is unacquainted. For the present, Jasper, I will tell you frankly that the humble pittance on which she lives is insufficient for the additional cost of your support. I can contribute nothing; I can be but a burthen myself. From herself you would never hear this; she would go on still, as she has done hitherto, struggling and pinching, battling with privations, and living that fevered life of combat that is worse than a thousand deaths. Raper, too, in his own fashion, would make sacrifices for you; but would you endure the thought of this? Does not the very notion revolt against all your feelings of honour and manly independence? Yes, boy, that honest grasp of the hand assures me that you think so! You must not, however,

let it appear that I have confided this fact to you. It is a secret that she would never forgive my having divulged. The very discussion of it has cost us the widest estrangements we have ever suffered, and it would peril the continuance of our affection to speak of it."

"I will be secret," said I, firmly.

"Do so, boy; and remember that when I speak of your accompanying me to Paris, you express your wish to see the capital and its brilliant pleasures. Show, if not weary of this dreary existence here, that you at least are not dead to all higher and nobler ambitions. Question me about the life of the great world, and in your words and questions exhibit the interest the theme suggests. I have my own plan for your advancement, of which you shall hear later."

He seemed to expect that I would show some curiosity regarding the future, but my thoughts were all too busy with the present. They were all turned to that home I was about to leave — to the fond mother I was to part from — to honest Joseph himself — my guide, my friend, and my companion; and for what? An unknown sea, upon which I was to adventure without enterprise or enthusiasm.

The Count continued to talk of Paris, and his various friends there, with whom he assured me I should be a favourite. He pictured the life of the great city in all its brightest colours. He mentioned the names of many who had entered it as unknown and friendless as myself, and yet, in a few years, had won their way up to high distinction. There was a vagueness in all this, which did not satisfy me; but I

was too deeply occupied with other thoughts to question or cavil at what he said.

When we went back to supper, Raper was there to pay his respects to the Count. De Gabriac received his respectful compliments coldly and haughtily: he even interrupted the little address poor Joseph had so carefully studied and committed to memory, by asking if he still continued to bewilder his faculties with Greek particles and obsolete dialects; and then, without waiting for his reply, he seated himself at the table, and arranged his napkin.

"Master Joseph," said he, half sarcastically, "the world has been pleased to outlive these follies: they have come to the wise resolve that, when languages are dead, they ought to be buried; and they have little sympathy with those who wish to resuscitate and disinter them."

"It is but an abuse of terms to call them dead, Count," replied Joseph. "Truth, in whatever tongue it be syllabled, does not die. Fidelity to nature in our age will be acknowledged as correct in centuries after."

"Our own time gives us as good models, and with less trouble to look for them," said the Count, flippantly. "Your dreamy book-worm is too prone to delve in the earth and not to coin the ore that he has discovered. Take Jasper there; you have taught him diligently and patiently: I'll be sworn you have neglected him in nothing, so far as your own knowledge went; and yet, before he shall have been three months in Paris, he will look upon you, his master, as an infant. The interval between you will be wide as

the broad Atlantic; and the obstacles and crosses, to overcome which will be with him the work of a second, would be to you difficulties insurmountable."

"To Paris! Jasper go to Paris!" exclaimed my mother, as she grew deadly pale.

"Jasper leave us!" cried Raper, in a tone of terror.

"And why not?" replied the Count. "Is it here you would have him waste the best years of youth? Is it in the wild barbarism of this dreary valley that he will catch glimpses of the prizes for which men struggle and contend? The boy himself has higher and nobler instincts; he feels that this is but the sluggish existence of a mere peasant; and that yonder is the tournament where knights are jousting."

"And you wish to leave us, Jasper?" cried my mother, with a quivering lip, and a terrible expression of anxiety in her features.

"To forsake your home!" muttered Raper.

"Ask himself; let him be as frank with you as he was half an hour ago with me, and you will know the truth."

"Oh! Jasper, speak! — leave me not in this dreadful suspense!" cried my mother; "for in all my troubles I never pictured to my mind this calamity."

"No, no!" said Raper; "the boy's nature has no duplicity — he never thought of this!"

"Ask him, I say," cried the Count; "ask him if he wish not to accompany me to Paris."

I could bear no longer the power of the gaze that I felt was fixed upon me, but, falling at her feet, I hid my face in her lap, and cried bitterly. My heart was

actually bursting with the fulness of sorrow, and I sobbed myself to sleep, still weeping through my dreams, and shedding hot tears as I slumbered.

My dream is more graven on my memory than the events which followed my awaking. I could recount the strange and incoherent fancies which chased each other through my brain on that night, and yet not tell the actual occurrences of the following day.

I do remember something of sitting beside my mother, with my hand locked in hers, and feeling the wet cheek that from time to time was pressed against my own — of the soft hand, as it parted the hair upon my forehead, and the burning kiss that seemed to sear it. Passages of intense emotion — how caused I know not — are graven in my mind; memories of a grief that seemed to wrench the heart with present suffering, and cast shadows of darkest meaning on the future. Oh, no! no! the sorrows — if they be indeed sorrows — of childhood are not short-lived; they mould the affections, and dispose them in a fashion that endures for many a year to come.

While I recall to mind these afflictions of the actual events of my last hours at Reichenau, I can relate but the very slightest traits. I do remember poor Raper storing my little portmanteau with some of the last few volumes that remained to him of his little store of books — of my mother showing me a secret pocket of the trunk, not to be opened, save when some emergency or difficulty had presented itself — of my astonishment at the number of things provided for my use, and the appliances of comfort and convenience which were placed at my disposal — and then, more

forcibly than all else, of the contemptuous scorn with which the Count surveyed the preparation, and asked "if my wardrobe contained nothing better than these rags?"

Of the last sad moment of parting — the agony of my mother's grief as she clasped me in her arms, till I was torn away by force, and with my swimming faculties I thought to have seen her fall fainting to the ground — of these I will not speak, for I dare not, even now!

END OF VOL. I.

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Lever, Charles James

Sir Jasper Carew, his life and experiences

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